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GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

100 Inspiring plants to grow

Selected by Ulf Nordfjell

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EDITOR'S LETTER

What is it that makes gardeners choose one plant over another? There are practical considerations; location and microclimate, and ideas about what goes and grows with what. Some plants may be considered 'must-haves' or favoured because they mark a particular turning point in the year. But of those, which are the finest? The bluest of the blue pulmonarias or the most elegant species rose ?

We asked multi award-winning garden designer Ulf Nordfjell to list the 100 plants that he is most inspired by and that he would confidently recommend to other gardeners. Ulf's work fuses a strong sense of ecology with a Swedish sense of design, and he is a master at combining perennials, bulbs and grasses. He described compiling the list as 'like doing a huge puzzle', and he includes the familiar, such as the exceptionally long-lived *Narcissus* 'Actaea' with pure-white flowers and old-fashioned scent, as well as some rarities, such as *Tulipa undulatifolia*, a wild form of tulip with tomato-red petals. There are lots of planting ideas for new and more adventurous gardeners.

Inherently, gardeners push back against a modern throw-away culture and in this issue Britain's top gardeners share their favourite, long-loved tools. Tom Coward, head gardener at Gravetye Manor has a narrow trowel for weeding and planting that he discovered ten years ago while guest gardening at Chanticleer Garden, USA, and that he has used every day since, Chatsworth's cut flower grower, Becky Crowley notes a planting line that was upcycled by her predecessor from the metal posts of the original Chatsworth garden signposts and curator at RHS Wisley, Matthew Pottage, describes a folding saw he uses daily that he bought as a horticultural student. What's notable is provenance and practicality in equal measure. Choose carefully and a good tool will last a lifetime: It's future heritage, made or bought.

I hope you enjoy the issue,

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR

JASON INGRAM

Pure-white *Narcissus* 'Actaea' is exceptionally long-lived, it's one of Ulf Nordfjell's plant choices, page 35.

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MARIANNE MAJERUS

Matt Keightley's design creates a feeling of space in a small west London garden, page 48.

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Iris 'George'
by Richard Bloom

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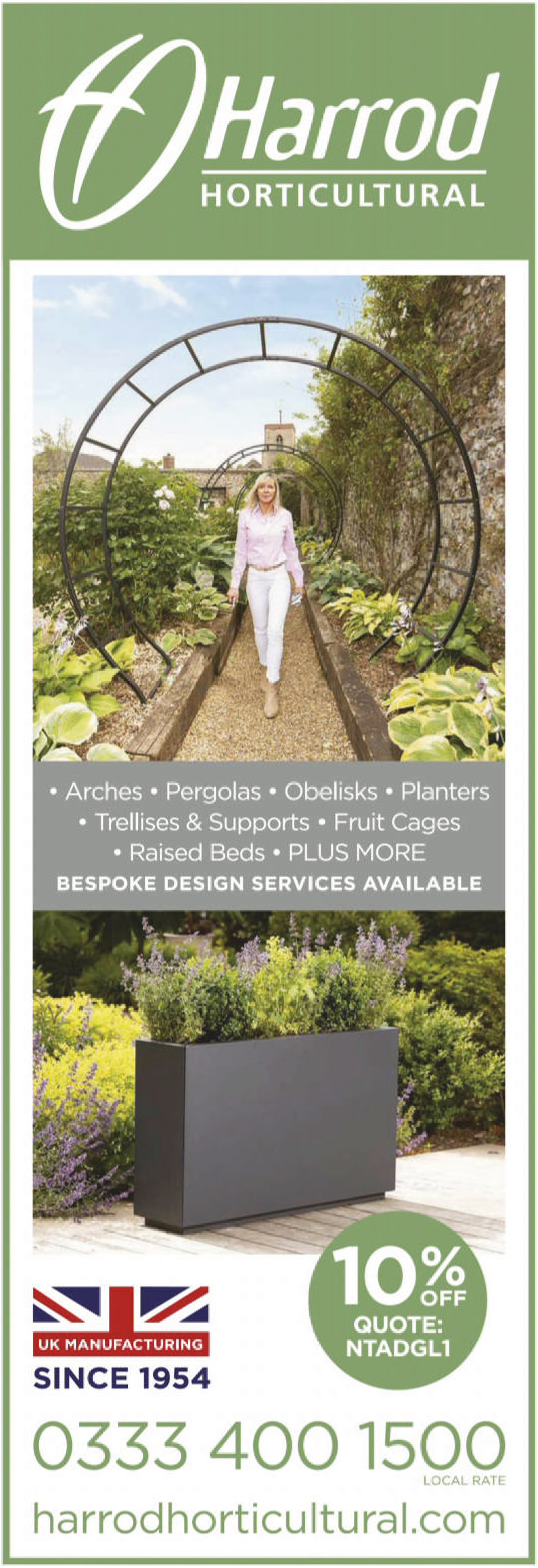

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ULF NORDFJELL

Ulf selects 100 of his favourite garden plants, page 35 *"Compiling this list in winter reminded me of how much I long every year for the soft-coloured flowers of spring."*

RICHARD BLOOM

Richard shot our selection of reticulate iris, page 62. *"So many new and diverse cultivars with striking colours, patterns and forms, thanks to Alan McMurtrie and Jacques Amand International."*

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

JOSHUA SPARKES

Joshua explains Korean Natural Farming, page 80. *"We are entering a horticultural renaissance, focusing on sustainability while challenging the norm: for me this begins with the soil."*

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JAMES BASSON

James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design with his wife Helen, specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

FERGUS GARRETT

Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student and volunteer programmes at Dixter and through worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008.

ANNA PAVORD

Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

DAN PEARSON

Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show at Chelsea in 2015.

SARAH PRICE

Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who won worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and 2018, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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Mark Gregory's Welcome to Yorkshire garden won Gold and the People's Choice at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2018.

THE SPEAKERS

Mark Gregory is a 21-times gold medal winner at RHS Chelsea Flower Show, including his win in 2018 as People's Choice with his evocative Welcome to Yorkshire garden. He is returning in 2019 with another garden for the same sponsor.

Ann-Marie Powell is a Chelsea regular, both as a designer (she designed the RHS Greening Grey Britain garden in 2016) and as a presenter for the BBC. She is currently designing two new garden areas at RHS Garden Wisley.

Tamara Bridge won RHS Young Designer of the Year in 2015 at Tatton Park. She has since appeared twice at Chelsea with a BBC Radio 2 Feel Good garden in 2017, and a garden for Warner Edwards in 2018. For 2019 she is joining Tom Dixon to create the IKEA garden in the Great Pavilion.

Mark Straver and Robin Wallis set up Hortus Loci in 2011. The nursery has become known for its expertise in sourcing a wide range of plants from around the world and working with designers to supply plants for their show gardens, including Mark and Tamara this year.

FRIDAY 26 APRIL 2019

HORTUS LOCI CHELSEA PLANT PREVIEW

Join us for a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the 2019 RHS Chelsea Flower Show with designers Mark Gregory and Tamara Bridge in conversation with Ann-Marie Powell and plant growers Hortus Loci

If you're a visitor to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, you'll be aware of the quality and quantity of plants that fill all the show gardens. But have you ever wondered how the designers make their selection before they play their starring roles at the show? Our reader day at growers Hortus Loci aims to give you an insight. Working in close partnership with designers, Hortus Loci begins the growing and sourcing of plants as much as a year before the show, reaching a frenzy of logistics once the garden builds begin in early May. You'll get a sneak peek at what's likely to be this year's must-have plant, as well as an insight into the likely trends at Chelsea. Nurserymen **Mark Straver** and **Robin Wallis** will talk about how the plants are selected and grown with a tour of the behind-the-scenes beds and polytunnels, and then following lunch, designers **Mark Gregory** and **Tamara Bridge** will talk with **Ann-Marie Powell** about their highly anticipated Chelsea gardens for 2019, their choice of plants and how their designs are progressing from concept to nerve-wracking completion. Your day also includes time to browse the nursery and make your own plant selections with a special £5 discount voucher.

EVENT DETAILS

Price £85 per person, including lunch and refreshments.

Date Friday 26 April, 2019.
Venue The Plant Centre, Hortus Loci,
Hound Green, Hook, Hampshire RG27 8LQ.

Programme
10am Arrival, coffee and cake.
10.30am Guided tour of the nursery and the Chelsea plant stock beds.
12 noon Lunch provided by on-site Hobo.co artisan café and kitchen.
1.30pm Mark Gregory and Tamara Bridge in conversation with Ann-Marie Powell.
For the rest of the afternoon you are free to explore the nursery and buy plants with your special £5 discount voucher.

You can also sign up on the day for a loyalty card entitling you to a 10 per cent discount for further purchases at The Plant Centre Hortus Loci.

Tickets and directions will be sent out prior to the event. Booking is essential. Please advise us of any dietary or accessibility requirements.

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DIG IN

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

ANNA SKLADMANN

GOLD RUSH

Artist Anna Skladmann's beautiful photographs of flowers are created using high-definition scans of flowers she has first submerged in liquids, including milk and water, which shows the flowers in meticulous detail. Her latest exhibition *The Man with the Midas Touch*, which opens at the Garden Museum in London this month, focusses on 30 gold-medal winning narcissi from the 2016 RHS Chelsea Flower Show, *N*. 'Mondragon' (above) and *N*. 'Unique' (left) all grown by Johnny Walkers. Her aim she says is to depict the flowers as in nature, rather than nicely arranged in a bouquet. Entry to the exhibition is included in the museum admission price of £10. 14 February – 1 March 2019, **gardenmuseum.org.uk**

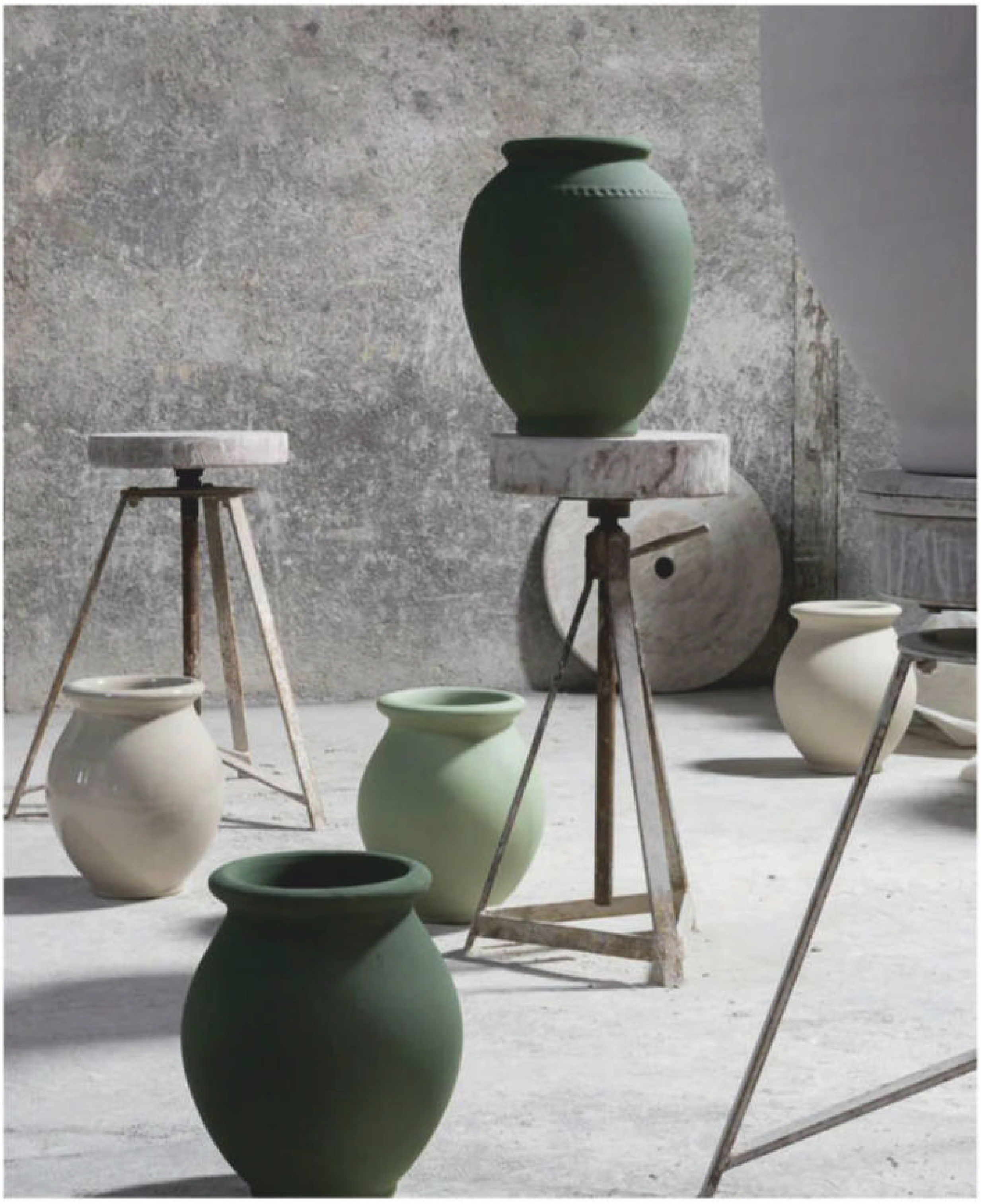
News

COMPILED BY ALYS HURN

PLANTIPP: PIERRICK VERNY

MINTY FRESH

The variegated cream and green leaves of Agastache *'Crazy Fortune' not only look intriguing but they also release a lovely menthol scent when brushed against. Compact, in size, drought tolerant and fully hardy, this new* Agastache, *from Hayloft Plants, is perfect for growing in containers. It will produce attractive bottle-brush shaped purple flowerheads from May until October above evergreen leaves. Pollinating insects love it and the flower stems are good for cutting. Grows to 75cm. You can buy three plants for £18,* **hayloft-plants.co.uk**



NATURAL STYLE

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World of colour

If you're a lover of hellebores then don't miss the chance to tour Ashwood Nurseries to learn more about how the nursery grows its award-winning selection, and buy choice hellebores and other plants for winter interest. Nursery owner John Massey will also be giving an an illustrated lecture on The World of Hellebores and a guided tour of his own private garden (weather permitting) on 26 February. Tickets for the tours, which last an hour, cost £5 and £22.50 for the lecture. All need to be booked in advance. For more details and dates visit **ashwoodnurseries.com**

PIERRICK VERNY.

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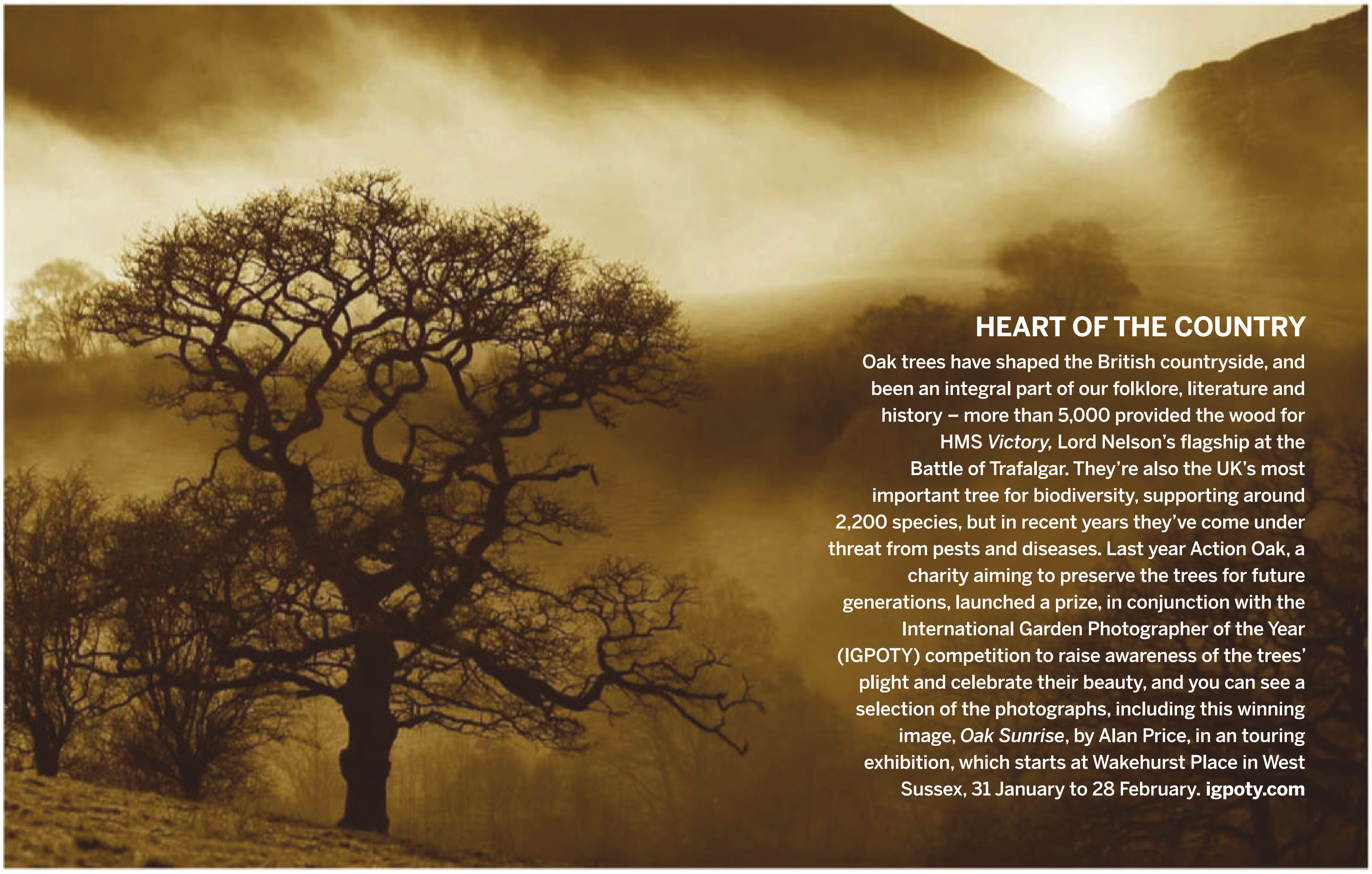

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PEEK BEHIND THE SCENES

RHS Malvern has some early bird offers on exclusive events at its Spring Festival (9-12 May), including the chance to tour the show with James Alexander-Sinclair on Thursday evening before it opens to the public, or enjoy afternoon tea on Saturday, with a talk from expert gardener Sarah Raven, but be quick as tickets sell out fast. Prices start at £38, not including entrance fee. For details of these and other events visit ***rhsmalvern.co.uk***

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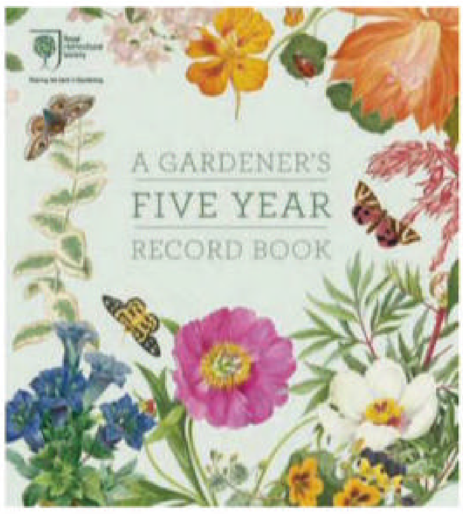

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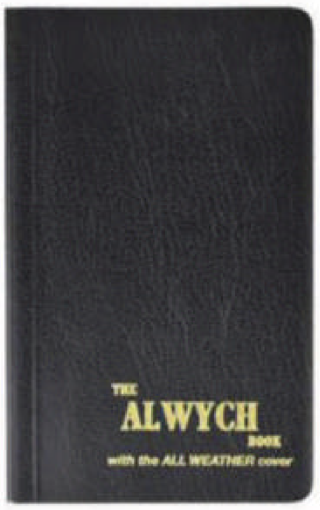

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In 2020 Botanica is proud to be celebrating its 20th anniversary, and we have some special trips planned to mark the occasion.

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- *Italian Lakes & Croatian Wildflowers*
- *Madeira Botanical Tours*
- *Gardens of Spain and Portugal*
- *Morocco Garden Tours*
- *Luxury India train & Darjeeling Tea Gardens*
- *Chinese Gardens*
- *Slovenia & Croatia Coastal Cruises*
- *Gardens of the Baltics*
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- *South America Botanical Discoveries*

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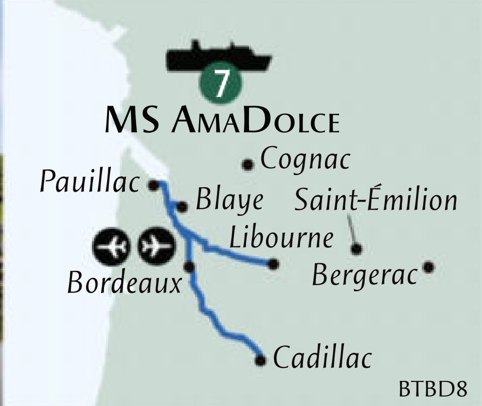
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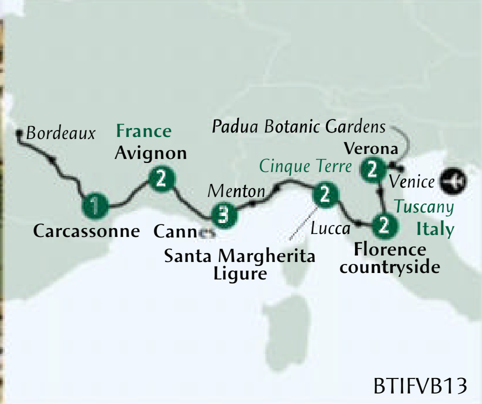
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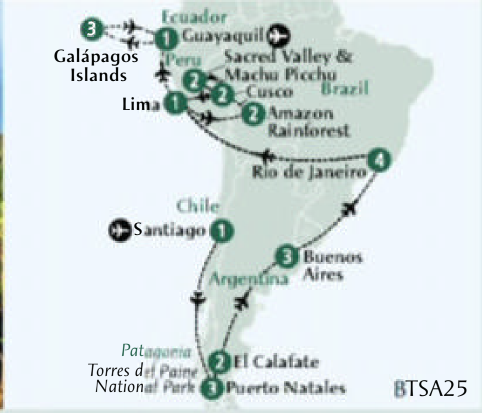
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① **NGS Snowdrop Festival**
Don't miss the National Garden Scheme's annual Snowdrop Festival. More than 90 snowdrop gardens across the UK, including Lacock Abbey Gardens (shown), will open for charity on various dates throughout February. To find a spectacular snowdrop display near you visit ngs.org.uk/find-a-garden/snowdrop-gardens

② **Designing with Plants**
Learn more about selecting plants for an effective design in this workshop aimed at those thinking of starting a new garden or looking to refresh an established area. Run by Andrew Hellman, the day will offer plenty of practical advice on planting combinations and problem-solving plants. 8 February, 11am-1.30pm. £35. RHS Hyde Hall, Creephedge Lane, Rettendon Common, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 8ET. Tel 0845 612 1253, rhs.org.uk

③ **Study at the Eden Project**
Find out more about Cornwall College's university-level courses at its Eden Project open day. Among the courses on offer at the college's Eden Project campus is the BSc in Garden and Landscape Design. Places on the open day need to be booked in advance. 9 February, 11am-1pm. The Eden Project, Bodelva, St Austell, Cornwall PL24 2SG. Tel 0330 123 2523, cornwall.ac.uk

④ **Botanical Art Surgery**
Meet one of Kew's botanical artists and get expert advice on developing your own artwork at this drop-in day for budding botanical artists, held at the Shirley Sherwood Art Gallery, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. No need to book, just come along on the day. 17 February, 11am-3pm. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond TW9 3AE. Tel 020 8332 5655, kew.org

⑤ **The Land Where Lemons Grow**
Remind yourself of warmer days at this talk by author Helena Attlee for Oxford University Botanic Garden winter lecture series. Helena will talk about her bestselling book, which recounts her journey through Italy to uncover the history of citrus fruits. 21 February, £15. Andrew Wiles Building, University of Oxford, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6GG. Tel 01865 610305, obga.ox.ac.uk

⑥ **Great Dixter Winter Weekend**
Take the opportunity to see more of the structural side of one of the country's greatest gardens, when Great Dixter opens for its winter weekend. As well as the famous topiary in the Peacock Garden, the garden also holds many winter-flowering shrubs, bulbs and hellebores. 23-24 February 2019, 10am-4pm. 18 February, 10am-4.30pm. £125. Great Dixter, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH. Tel 01797 252878, greatdixter.co.uk

⑦ **Graft your own Apple Trees**
Learn how to graft your own apple trees on this one-day workshop with Hilary Dodson. All necessary materials will be provided and you can take home the tree you work on at the event. 28 February, 10am-12pm. Helmsley Walled Garden, Cleveland Way, Helmsley, North Yorkshire YO62 5AH. Tel 01439 771427, helmsleywalledgarden.org.uk

⑧ **Garden Design Drawing Skills**
Hone your drawing and perspective skills on this workshop led by Andrew Wilson, focussing on colour rendering and line work that will help you take your sketches to a new level. It's one of a series of short courses run by the London College of Garden Design at various venues in London. 28 February, from £94, RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. Tel 020 3176 5830, lcgd.org.uk

⑨ **Chatsworth Garden Lecture**
Discover more about the history of the gardens at Chatsworth and its plans for the future in this talk by head gardener Steve Porter. 1 March, 10.30am. £12. Hartington Room, Chatsworth, Bakewell, Derbyshire DE45 IPP. Tel 01246 565300, chatsworth.org

⑩ **Garden Museum Garden Visits**
Book now for a place on one of the new series of the Garden Museum's popular Garden Visits. First off is a behind-the-scenes tour of Savill Gardens and Valley Gardens in Windsor on 16 May. Later tours will visit Woolbeding Gardens in West Sussex, Redhill Lodge in Rutland and Boughton House in Northamptonshire. Book early as these events tend to sell out quickly. For details of all tours and prices visit gardenmuseum.org.uk

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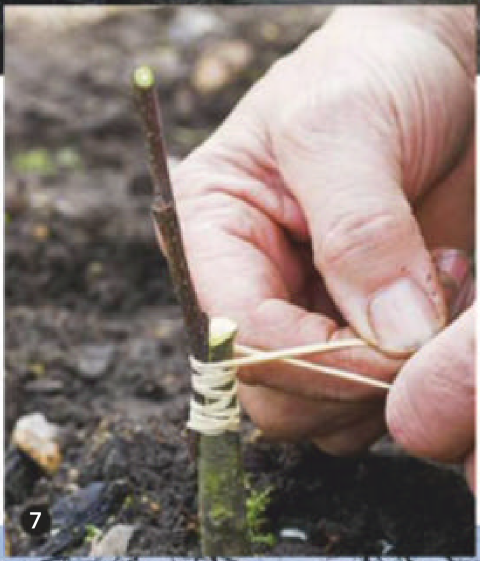
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GARDENS OF MARRAKECH

A SEVEN NIGHT HOLIDAY | 2 MAY 2019

Marrakech is an intoxicating destination for all the senses, and the city and its surroundings are also home to a number of remarkable gardens. In the company of an expert horticulturist, we shall explore some of the finest – from the famous Jardins Majorelle created by Yves Saint Laurent, to several private gardens which are not normally open to the public. Our base for the duration is the 5★ Palais Aziza & Spa, which is surrounded by five acres of gardens and patios.

Price from £3,396 per person (single supp. £595) for seven nights including flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast, seven lunches, four dinners, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

VILLAS & GARDENS AROUND ROME

FIVE NIGHT HOLIDAY | 26 MAY & 6 OCTOBER 2019

The countryside surrounding Rome is home to a number of wonderful gardens including the beautiful and romantic gardens of La Landriana and Ninfa. A day will be devoted to Tivoli with its two great gardens: the Villa D'Este and Hadrian's Villa and another to Rome itself where we will visit the Villa Borghese Gardens and Gallery and the Villa Torlonia. We also visit the Villa Lante - one of the greatest of all Italian Renaissance gardens and the gardens of the Villa Farnese. We stay at the 4★ Park Hotel Villa Grazioli in Frascati, a charming town surrounded by vineyards only 20 kilometres from Rome.

Price from £1,766 per person (single supp. £298) for five nights including flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast two lunche, three dinners, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Lecturer.

THE ITALIAN LAKES

SIX NIGHT HOLIDAYS | 24 APRIL & 5 JUNE 2019

Our tour is based at the 4★ Hotel Terminus, in the lakeside town of Como. After a walking tour, we travel by hydrofoil to idyllic Bellagio, known as the 'Pearl of the Lake'. We shall explore the gardens at the Villa Carlotta before taking a private boat to Villa Balbianello. A day is spent at Stresa, and we will also visit the beautiful Borromean Islands. In Cernobbio we shall enjoy lunch at the renowned Villa D'Este, one of the finest hotels in Italy.

Price from £2,288 per person (April, single supp. £460) or £2,457 per person (June, single supp. £470) for six nights including flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast, three dinners, three lunches, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

GARDENS OF THE RIVIERA

FIVE NIGHT HOLIDAYS | 7 APRIL & 15 SEPTEMBER 2019

Based at the 4★ Hôtel Napoléon in Menton, we visit the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild in St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, as famous for its art collection as for the nine beautiful gardens, and the Villa Kerylos. In Menton, we visit the Val Rahmeh garden, as well as Lawrence Johnston's garden, Serre de la Madonne, and in Monaco we see the collection of succulents at the Jardin Exotique. Across the border in Italy we visit the famous Hanbury garden at La Mortola and Ursula Piacenza's private garden, the Villa Piacenza Boccanegra.

Price from £1,698 per person (April, single supp. £268) or £1,878 per person (September, single supp. £268) for five nights including flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast, three dinners, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

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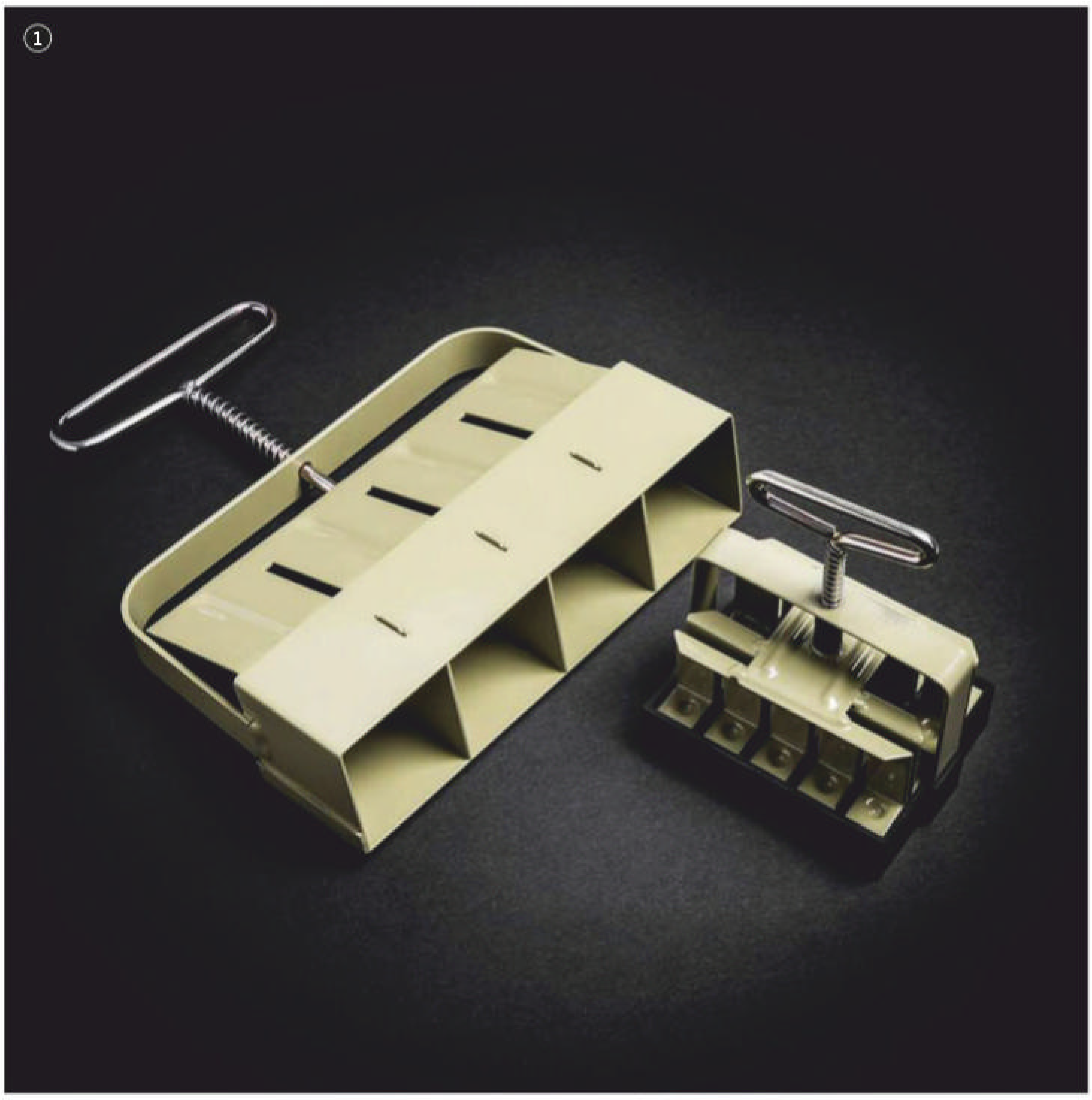

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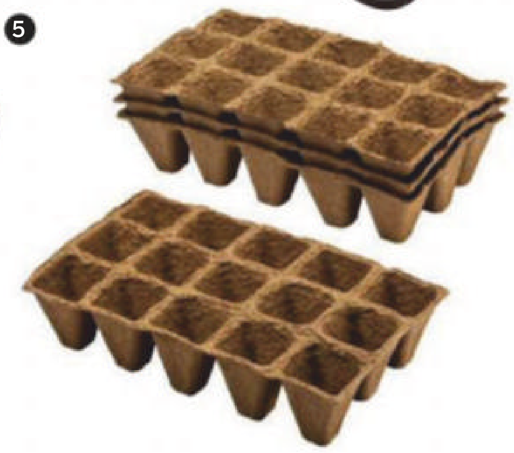

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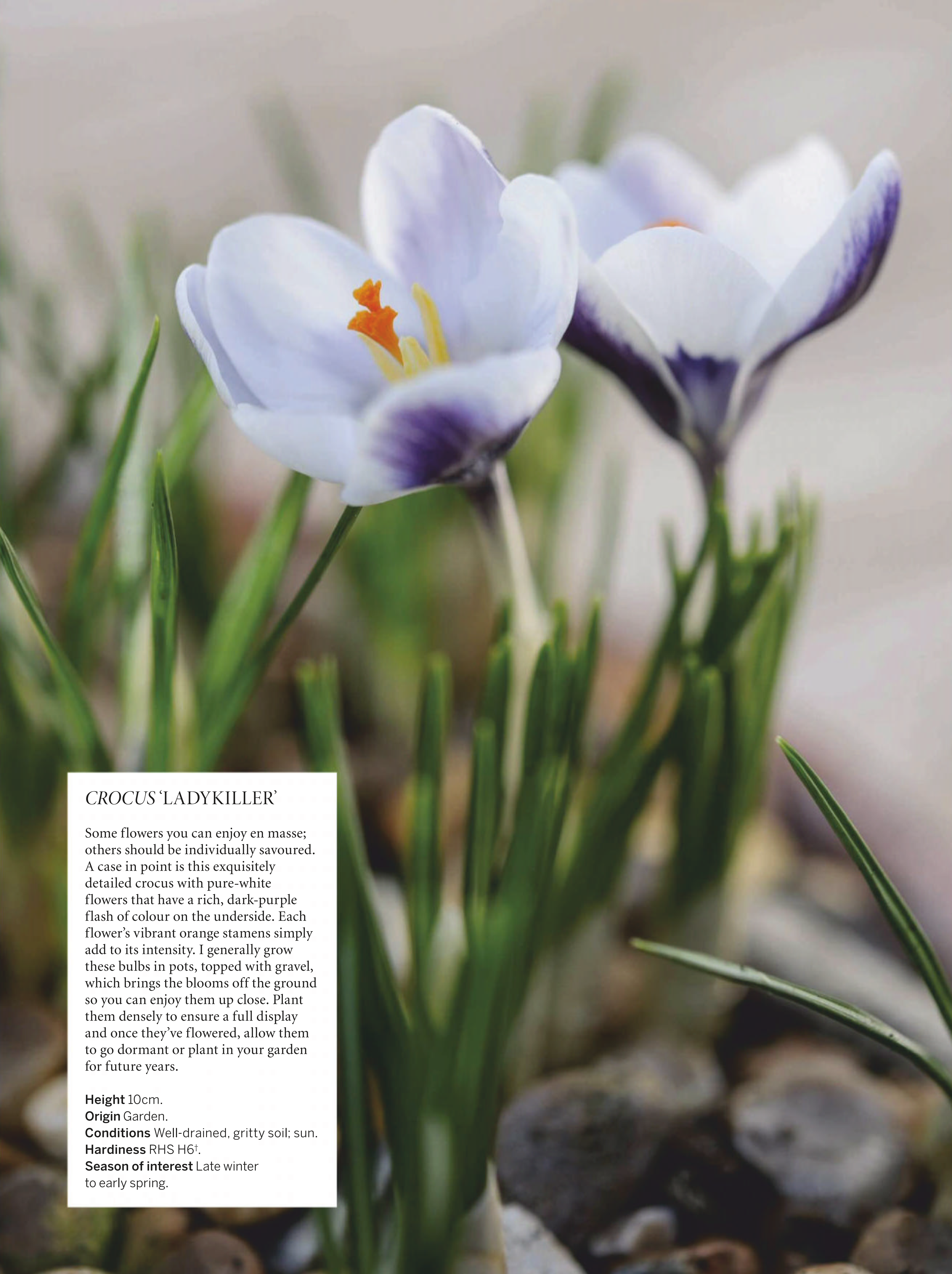


CROCUS ‘LADYKILLER’

Some flowers you can enjoy en masse; others should be individually savoured. A case in point is this exquisitely detailed crocus with pure-white flowers that have a rich, dark-purple flash of colour on the underside. Each flower’s vibrant orange stamens simply add to its intensity. I generally grow these bulbs in pots, topped with gravel, which brings the blooms off the ground so you can enjoy them up close. Plant them densely to ensure a full display and once they’ve flowered, allow them to go dormant or plant in your garden for future years.

Height 10cm.
Origin Garden.
Conditions Well-drained, gritty soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H6[†].
Season of interest Late winter to early spring.

FEBRUARY PLANTS

In the first of a new series, Parham House's head gardener Tom Brown selects the best fragrant and colourful plants to start the year

WORDS TOM BROWN PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

Tom Brown
is head gardener
at Parham House
parhaminsussex.co.uk

SARCOCOCCA CONFUSA

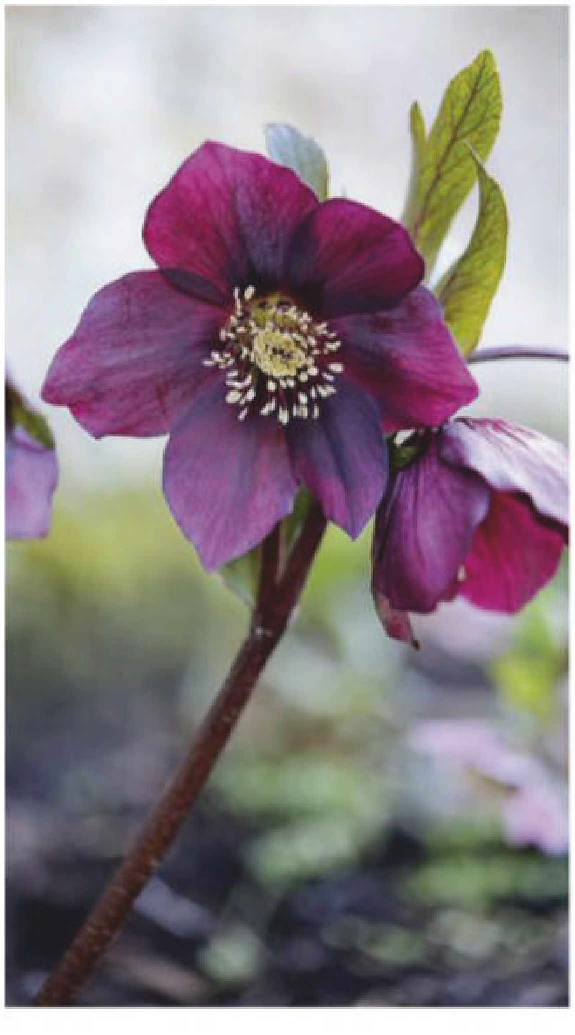
A shrub whose popularity is well founded. With its dark, glossy green foliage and overwhelming scent, *Sarcococca confusa* is hard to beat and even harder to pass by in a garden during February. Its highly scented, pure-white flowers stand out bright against the contrasting evergreen leaves. Plant near a doorway to make the most of the scent, a welcome treat at a time of year when you're less likely to venture too far from the house. *Sarcococca* works well in most garden situations, and can even be grown in a pot and clipped to shape. AGM*.

Height 1.5-2.5m.
Origin China.
Conditions Moist, fertile, well-drained soil; part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.
Season of interest February.

HELLEBORUS X HYBRIDUS 'QUEEN OF SPADES'

I always look forward to seeing hellebores. Recent breeding has ensured there is now a full spectrum of colour to provide the perfect late-winter pick-me-up. Dark-purple hellebores associate beautifully with pale-pink cultivars as well as with snowdrops and *Cyclamen coum* in borders and pots. Remove old leaves around Christmas and mulch with leaf mould, you'll be able to appreciate the flowers unhindered. These will be followed by fresh leaves and, if you're lucky, new seedlings later in the summer.

Height 30-45cm.
Origin Garden.
Conditions Rich, well-drained soil; part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season of interest February to April.



GALANTHUS ELWESII

A superb form of this winter favourite. I particularly enjoy growing this species, not only for the large, white flowers – which can often be twice the size of our much-loved common snowdrop – but also because of the opulent, glaucous foliage that accompanies them. *Galanthus elwesii* is suitable for growing in containers where a gritty, free-draining compost mix can be achieved. However, it is a plant that dislikes excessive winter moisture so good drainage is essential. AGM.

Height 15-30cm.
Origin Balkans, western Turkey.
Conditions Any reasonable, well-drained soil; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-7b.
Season of interest Late winter to early spring.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

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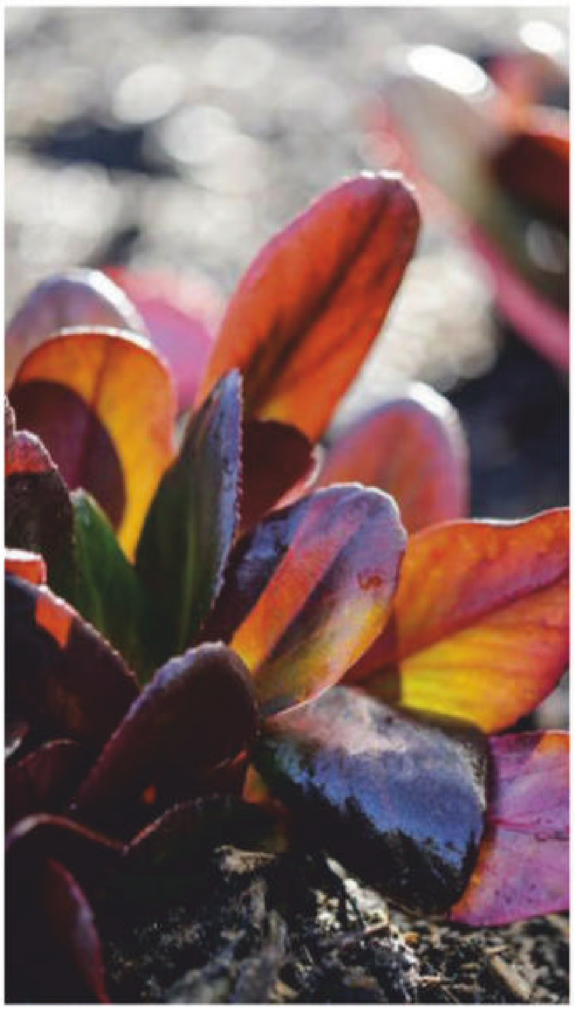
NARCISSUS PSEUDONARCISSUS

Our native lent lily came to my attention a number of years ago after I became frustrated by large hybrid daffodils looking incongruous with other naturalised planting in long grass or under trees. This delicate form of daffodil colonises an area over time, and as its foliage dies down in the early summer, it does so ever so gracefully thanks to its narrow and comparatively small leaves. Allow the seeds to form and avoid mowing (if grown in grass) until early July to ensure the best chance of increasing numbers.

Height 30-40cm.
Origin Western Europe.
Conditions Most moist, free-draining, fertile soils; sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest February to March.



BERGENIA 'WINTERMÄRCHEN'

While working on the trials field at RHS Wisley, I was fortunate enough to witness its three-year *Bergenia* trial. This one shone above all others thanks to its rich, beetroot-coloured foliage, which is illuminated by the winter sun. The foliage has a delicacy and elegance that eludes many bergenias, and its nodding pink flowers (in April and May) add to its charm. For the best winter colour, grow in a sunny position, and ensure reasonably moist soil in summer. AGM.

Height 30-45cm.
Origin Garden (species Himalayas).
Conditions Fertile, well drained soil in sun for best winter colour.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest Beetroot-coloured foliage in winter; flowers in April.

DAPHNE BHOLUA 'JACQUELINE POSTILL'

Though it may be a subtle presence for much of the year, few plants rival this daphne in full February flow. Planted in a sheltered position, ideally near your house, delicate pink flowers will appear and fill the air with sweet scent – perfect on a cold, winter's day. Some specimens retain their leaves better than others, but usually the flowering is uncompromised. Avoid excessive mulching or fertiliser around the base of this beautiful shrub. AGM.

Height 1.5-2.5m.
Origin Nepal to southern China.
Conditions Moist but well-drained soil; sheltered position.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season of interest Late winter to early spring.

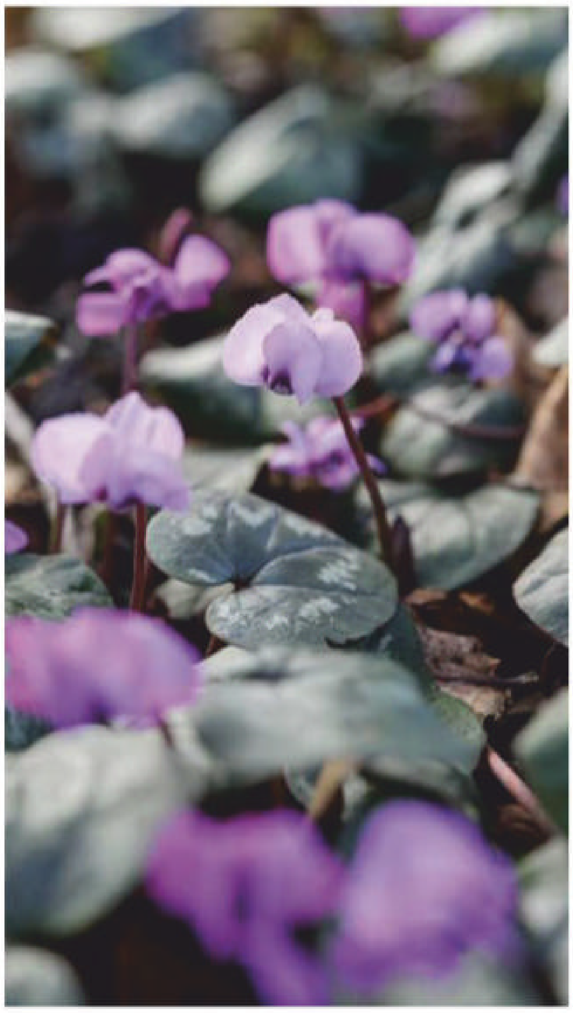
PLACES TO VISIT

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best

An absolute must for hellebore and snowdrop enthusiasts, **Ashwood Nurseries** has a large selection of plants for sale with many new and unusually coloured hellebores, bred on site. A seasonal highlight is when owner John Massey opens his garden for visitors, exhibiting a magnificent collection of trees and shrubs beautifully underplanted with aconites, cyclamen and exceptional hellebores. Ashwood Lower Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 0AE. Tel 01384 401996, ashwoodnurseries.com

Showcasing a large collection of plants for winter interest (many of which are rare and unusual), the **Sir Harold Hillier Gardens** boasts one of the UK's finest and most creative winter gardens. The planting is masterfully arranged to emphasise structure, texture and repetition – principles just as important, if not more so, than in summer displays. Vivid-coloured stems and sweetly scented flowers have been carefully selected and planted to great effect by the Hilliers' gardeners over the years. Jermyns Lane, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 0QA. Tel 01794 369318, hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/hilliergardens

There's a wonderful harmony of design and plantsmanship throughout Arabella Lennox-Boyd's own 12-acre garden at **Gresgarth Hall** in Lancashire herbaceous borders, a wild garden, a lake, orchard and a walled kitchen garden ▷



CYCLAMEN COUM

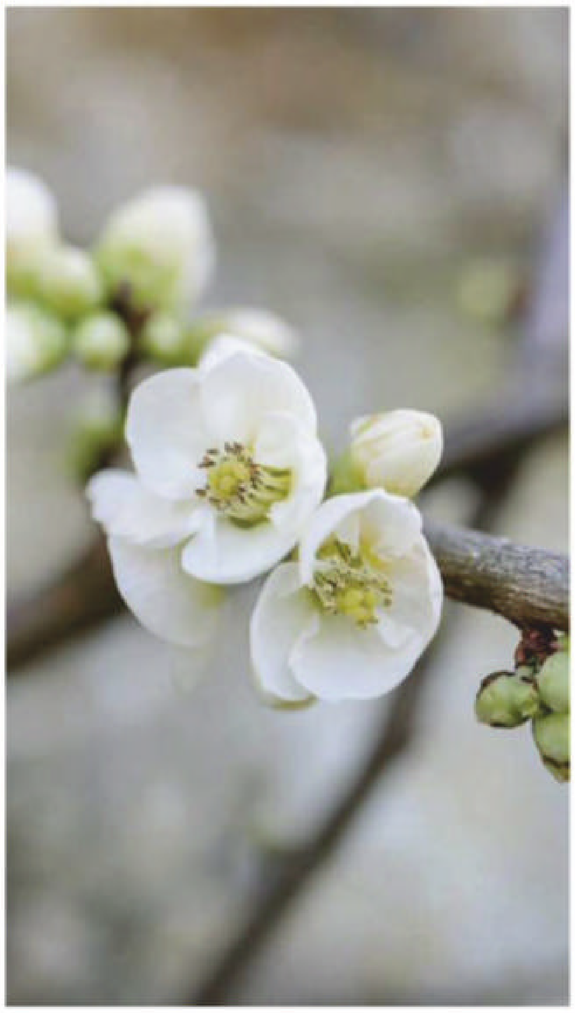
We all have those problematic spaces in our gardens where we struggle to establish plants or achieve a splash of colour. Hardy cyclamen can deliver plenty of the latter, plus exquisite foliage from autumn through spring in a number of our garden's tricky spots. I grow *Cyclamen coum* under conifers and find them self-seeding among the buttress roots of trees – places from which you'd assume most plants would shy away. Allow them a dry, dormant period during the summer and look out for silver-leaved and patterned forms in nurseries at this time of year. AGM.

Height 10cm.
Origin Caucasus.
Conditions Free-draining soils; full sun or partial shade, superb under trees.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest January to March.

PHORMIUM 'YELLOW WAVE'

I find one of the most exciting elements of gardening for winter interest is associating plants you rarely find together in a typical garden setting. In summer this cultivar is stunning with its vivid-yellow, sword-like foliage, but in the winter, planted near to *P. tenuifolium* 'Tom Thumb', it truly comes alive. Equally at home in containers, it also complements daffodils, dark tulips and even exotic-looking crown imperials. Continue to remove tired foliage to ensure a succession of fresh, brightly coloured leaves. AGM.

Height 2.5-4m.
Origin New Zealand.
Conditions Well-drained, reasonable soil; full sun for best colour.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 9a-11.
Season of interest Year-round.



CHAENOMELES SPECIOSA 'NIVALIS'

A most versatile plant that can be trained against a wall or grown as a free-standing, cushion-like shrub. I particularly like the elegance of this cultivar's white flowers, which bloom in February. Spherical fruits appear in late summer and give additional interest. Tolerant of most garden conditions, including a problematic, north-facing wall. Prune after flowering by removing a proportion of the oldest stems, thereby rejuvenating the shrub over time.

Height 2-3m.
Origin Garden (species China).
Conditions Ideally a well-drained, fertile soil but tolerant of clay and drought; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest Flowers late winter to early spring, fruits in summer to autumn.

▷ await visitors on the second Sunday of every month from February to November. An absolute delight on a frosty day. In particular, look out for her Galanthus Garden Open Day where you can also take in the many winter features, forms and textures. A number of witch hazels and emerging hellebores can also be enjoyed in flower as you wander through the many garden rooms. Check website for dates and opening times. 2 Forge Mill Cottages, Caton, Lancaster LA2 9NB. Tel 01524 771838, arabellalennoxboyd.com

Held in the Princess of Wales Conservatory, at the **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew**, the annual Kew Orchid Festival (9 February – 10 March), displays a wide variety and range of these exotic blooms. Learn about the plight of many endangered orchid species in their wild habitats, or simply marvel at the mouth-watering towers of *Phalaenopsis*, large *Cymbidium* and other unusual genera. A masterpiece of horticulture from one of the world's most famous botanical gardens. Open daily 10am-3.30pm. Kew, Richmond, London TW9 3AE. kew.org

At **Easton Walled Gardens**, Ursula Cholmeley has lovingly restored and created 12 acres of beautiful gardens to explore, including a woodland walk and swathes of honey-scented snowdrops that carpet the Lower Gardens. Many rare and unusual forms of snowdrops can be seen on display. On several days this month you can join an exclusive Snowdrop Tour before the gardens open to the public, which will give you the chance to enjoy these flowers in their own space and time while learning a little more about their history, origin, botany and growing techniques. Easton, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG33 5AP. Tel 01476 530063, visiteaston.co.uk

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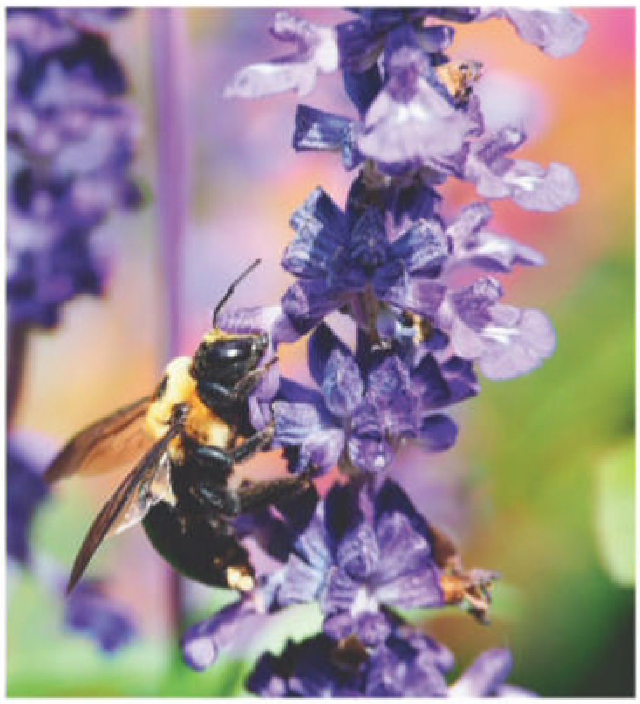

You really haven't experienced flower power until you witness a Pictorial Meadow in all its gorgeous glory. Dramatic swathes of vibrant hues sweep the land, creating a mesmerising carpet that's like a smorgasbord for bees and other pollinators to feast on.

From its early days experimenting across the urban landscape in Sheffield, Pictorial Meadows has grown both in size and reputation. Its innovative seed mixes are designed to produce displays that are reliable, visually spectacular and extremely long-lasting. And the result is a magical display that blends not just a wide variety of wildflowers, but cultivated flowers too.

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There's an annual or perennial mix suitable for virtually any garden or landscape – from a beautiful garden border to a large-scale rural or urban project. Whether you go for the gloriously soft shades of Purple Haze (above left) or go full-out for the exuberant Pixie mix (above right), you're sure to love Pictorial Meadows.

Pictorial Meadows

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The Outsider

Horticulturist Hannah Gardner, treks high into the Rif mountains in search of an early flowering, ghostly narcissus, and plants its offspring in her own garden

WORDS HANNAH GARDNER ILLUSTRATION ALICE PATTULLO

An easy two-hour drive from Tangier, the Rif mountains in the northwest of Morocco may not have the high peaks of the imposing Toubkal region nor the dramatic gorges of the Anti-Atlas, but you'll discover colourful, vibrant mountains inhabited by scampering Barbary macaques. Impressive forests of Moroccan fir (*Abies pinsapo* var. *marocana*) and majestic Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*) grow up to 2,000m so the craggy hills feel verdant with a varied flora occurring throughout the gnarly limestone massifs, and the meandering valleys of the more humid western and central mountainous region. With patience Mount Lakra (2,159m) and the national park of Talassemtane are easily reached from Chefchaouen, a chilled out, photogenic Berber town, nestling at the southerly foot of the mountains. The northern slopes of the Rif descend to unspoilt coastline and have Mediterranean coastal vegetation.

Inspiration for the trip

Having hiked through the Atlas range on previous trips I wanted to discover new trails, and explore the wonderful blue-hued Chefchaouen. An authentic mountain town that offers easy access to the joyous mountains and a great Medina experience without the heavy tourist footfall and commercial intensity of Marrakech.

When to go

The best time to visit for botanical trekking is from late March to June.

Where to go

The traditional chalky blue-and-white-painted Berber architecture and bustling souks trading in quality, local crafts make Chefchaouen a charming trailhead. There are also two *hammams*, or Turkish baths, sitting just off the main square Place Outa el-Hammam, offering an essential steamy après-hike treat. I recommend Art du Bien Être located behind the mosque. Mount Tissouka (2,000m) and Mount El Kelaa (1,800m) overshadow the upper outskirts of town. Follow the (only) road up into the foothills and you initially pass through quiet, airy pine forest, the determined flower spikes of bulbous *Asphodelus* pushing dramatically through thick, dry pine litter. Occasional dwarf fan palms (*Chamaerops humilis*) and flowery *Cistus* bushes form the under-storey. As the road devolves into a serpentine, dusty track and the town diminishes you will find yourself among the shelter-giving, but deadly poisonous shrub *Nerium oleander* with its fleshy, exotic blooms creating a colourful vegetative tapestry that fills the *wadi* (river valley). Continuing on up through the forested slopes orchids become plentiful. I noted the handsome mauve flowers of *Dactylorhiza elata*, lemon yellow *Dactylorhiza romana* and decorative bee orchids favouring direct sun. Easier to spot from a distance are the chalice-like, magenta flowers and broad fragrant foliage of elegant *Paeonia coriacea*. An exquisite, low-growing pink (*Silene ibosii*) requires open rocky ground, associating with fragile bell flowers, *Allium roseum*, intricate dark toadflax (*Linaria tristis*) and the unusual bicoloured flowers of delicate *Rupicapnos africana*. Occasionally, *Putoria calabrica* occupies a crevice in the boulders. Trekking through the Rif to Talassemtane National Park you will explore mountainsides, ancient forests, and moist, shady gorges and discover the rich diversity of these relatively unknown north African habitats.

Plant to grow at home

Sadly, the hardy, early flowering ghostly *Narcissus romieuxii* subsp. *albidus* is not a straightforward choice as a garden plant, although it flourishes in a well-drained pan when grown under glass. Nevertheless, I remain inspired by these pale and seemingly frail hoop-petticoat daffodils as I've wandered among them in the oak and cedar forests of both the Rif and Middle Atlas Mountains (above 1,500m). A drift of the geographically distinct but visually similar and far easier, golden-yellow *Narcissus bulbocodium* is my nod to these sweet memories. Available to plant as small bulbs in autumn, and growing to only 15cm, these fine-leaved daffodils are dominated by a wide, textured, up-turned corona cup and will persist and slowly increase when naturalised in unimproved grass where growth has been reduced by an early December cut. A pale, primrose-yellow, cultivar of *Narcissus romieuxii* that is worth a try is 'Julia Jane'. Plant in a clump in rich soil, and provide a warm sheltered position where they are baked by summer sun, such as near a south-facing wall, and they should thrive.

Guides and maps

Chefchaouen Editorial Piolet, ISBN: 978-8494195594, Scale: 1:75,000

The map shows local roads, country tracks and footpaths, and highlights nine recommended hiking trails in the Talassemtane National Park, plus six more in the Bouhachem Natural Park. If you are not comfortable with a map alone then local companies, such as Gite Talassemtane (see below), organise guides with a carrier mule and picnic supplies, or will suggest self-guided routes that enable you to see the best of the area.

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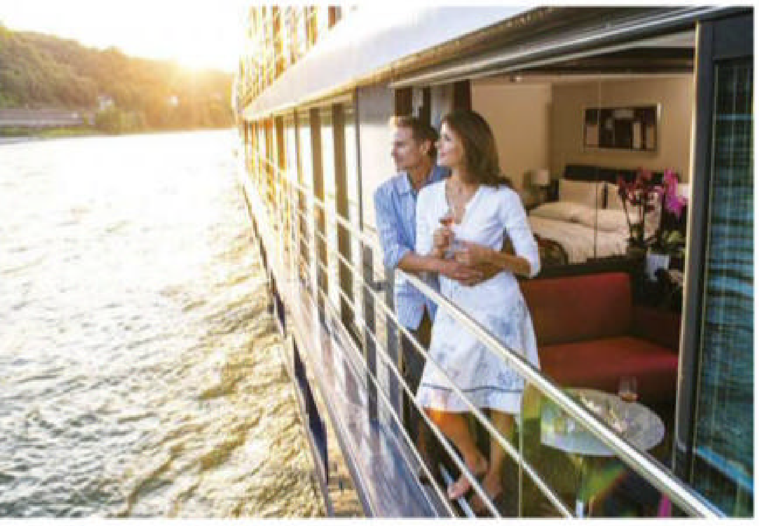

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GARDENING TALENT

Steve Lannin

Steve is head gardener at Mapperton in Dorset, where topiary trees form the framework to a romantic valley garden

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest garden memory I can remember sitting in a battered old chair in my grandad's greenhouse in Devon. I remember the warmth, the smells and the humidity; it was a special place for me.
Who has inspired your career? Horticulture is full of people who actively want to help you to succeed. The people who I have worked for and with over the years have all inspired and taught me.
Most valuable training Years ago we used to rig up a contraption to help us to reach some particularly challenging piece of topiary. It required a gardener to act as a counterweight to the gardener hedge cutting. As the most junior member of the team I spent a considerable amount of time as the counterweight watching a colleague called John hedging one winter. I think I learned pretty much everything I know about hedging from that time.
A favourite garden I like gardens that transport you; gardens with an otherworldly quality. Favourites include Rousham, Levens Hall, Allt-y-bela and, of course, Mapperton.
Dream plant destination I love walking along ancient hedgerows in the late spring, I know it's not exotic, but I love the combinations of stitchwort, vetch, campion, bluebells and yellow archangel.
Worthwhile tip Garden with your eyes – hands and tools are there to assist you.
Unsung hero of the plant world I love our native foxglove. When I worked in Cumbria we had great drifts of foxgloves through the damp woodland and the effect was just beautiful. I love the marginal wild plants that creep into the wilder corners of the garden and create stunning natural combinations.
Biggest challenge facing gardeners today The challenges facing the industry are multifaceted and complex; Brexit, climate change, bio security, but I think for me personally it's how to recruit the next generation of gardeners that is most concerning.
Favourite gardening books? I enjoy cutting and arranging flowers so I'm currently planning what to grow next season with Darroch and Michael Putnam's *Flower Colour Guide*.
What's the next big project you'll be tackling in the garden? There's a lot happening at Mapperton over the winter; we've added to the perennial spring bulbs and are planting more trees for autumn colour in the arboretum. We're refining and replanting areas too.
Contact steve@mapperton.com

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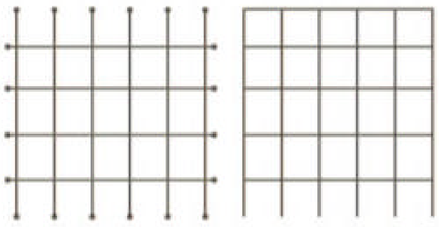

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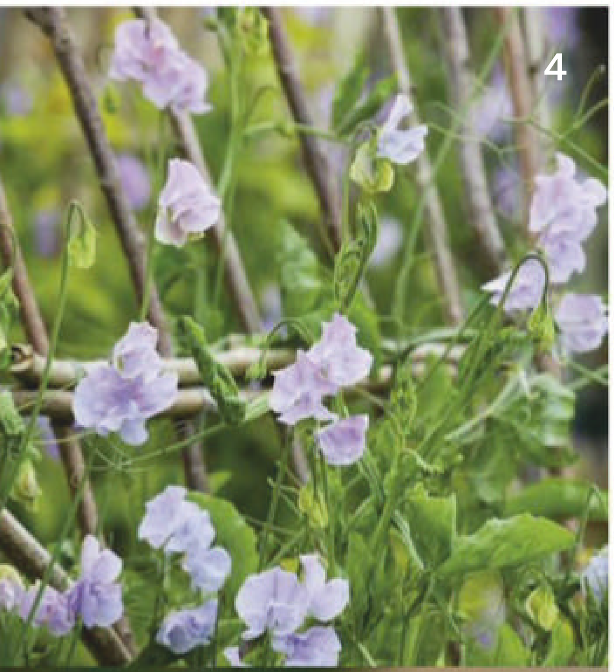
In my work as a landscape architect, working in different climate zones, I'm always looking for long-lasting plants that offer both natural-looking structure and soft colours – and ones that are loved by wild bees and butterflies. I don't use too many plants, preferring instead to repeat a limited number in different combinations so they offer harmony and variety throughout the year. All of this starts in my own garden, which contains many of the plants I've chosen here. Some are new species I'm trialling, others are plants I've grown for years – all are ones I love.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Annuals

1 *AMMI MAJUS* 'GRACELAND'
A pure-white umbellifer, with delicate, lacy flowers held above fern-like foliage. It normally flowers in June and July, but with successional sowing, you can keep the display going until September. AGM*. **Height (H)** 1.2-1.5m. **Spread (S)** 25cm. **Conditions (C)** Rich, well-drained soil; full sun to part shade. **Season of interest (SI)** July – September. **Hardiness rating (HR)** RHS H6†.

2 *ANTIRRHINUM MAJUS* 'ROCKET RED'
Snapdragons are short-lived, tender perennials that are normally grown as annuals. This one has tall, upright, dark-red flowers that add rich colour to a late-season border. **H** 70-90cm. **S** 25cm. **C** Rich, well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** July – September. **HR** USDA 7a-10b.

3 *COSMOS BIPINNATUS* 'PIED PIPER WHITE'
Cosmos bipinnatus are easy to grow with a long flowering season. This cultivar is perhaps the most elegant with fluted, white petals around a yellow eye. **H** 80cm-1.2m. **S** 40-50cm. **C** Fertile soil; full sun. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H3.

4 *LATHYRUS ODORATUS* 'CHATSWORTH'
An exceptionally pretty sweet pea with ruffled soft lavender blooms and a superb fragrance. **H** 1.8m. **S** 30cm. **C** Deep, fertile, moist but free-draining soil; full sun. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H2.

5 *NICOTIANA SUAVEOLENS*
A delicately scented plant with small, elegant white flowers on the end of soft-pink tubes. **H** 50cm-1.5m. **S** 45cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** June – September. **HR** USDA 10a-11.

6 *ORLAYA GRANDIFLORA* 'WHITE LACE'
This has been one of my favourite annuals for many years, with beautiful, pure-white umbellifer flowerheads. AGM. **H** 60cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** June – July. **HR** RHS H7.

Bulbs

7 *CAMASSIA LEICHTLINII* SUBSP. *SUKSDORFII*
Produces clumps of erect stems of deep lavender-blue flowers, which looks wonderful grown en masse with grasses, such as *Sesleria nitida* (see picture on page 39), and ferns. **H** 70cm, **S** 35 cm. **C** All soils, including heavy clay soil, full sun to part shade. **S1** May. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

8 *FRITILLARIA MELEAGRIS* VAR. *UNICOLOR* SUBVAR. *ALBA*
A self-seeding fritillary that I know has been growing in my garden for more than 70 years. With pretty, white pendent bells that dangle like lanterns on short stems, it looks absolutely stunning when grown en masse among carpets of *Asarum europaeum*. AGM. **H** 20cm. **S** 20cm. **C** Moist but well-drained soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** April – May. **HR** RHS H5.

9 *LILIUM MARTAGON* VAR. *ALBUM*
Another bulb that has grown in my garden, for many years. Its elegant white flowers with scrolled back petals and orange stamens look fabulous naturalised among grasses and ferns. **H** 1.6m. **S** 50cm. **C** Needs a deep, well-drained, humus-rich soil; part shade. **SI** June – July. **HR** RHS H6.

10 *LILIUM* 'ORANGE MARMALADE'
This vibrant-orange Turk's cap lily with slender arching petals is one of my favourite cultivars. Flowers shine out among green foliage. **H** 1.6m. **S** 40cm. **C** Needs a deep, rich, leafy, well-drained soil; part shade. **SI** June.

11 *NARCISSUS* 'ACTAEA'
An exceptionally long-lived narcissus with an old-fashioned scent. Its pure-white flowers have an orange red ring in the centre. Best in part shade. **H** 40-50cm. **S** 10cm. **C** Moist, well-drained soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** April – May. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

12 *NARCISSUS* 'THALIA'
A late-flowering cultivar that produces many pure-white flowers. Provides a delicate counterpart to early shoots of perennials, such as astilbes and epimediums. **H** 40cm. **S** 10m. **C** Moist, well-drained soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** April – May. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

ANTIRRHINUM MAJUS *'ROCKET RED' HAS TALL, UPRIGHT, DARK-RED FLOWERS THAT ADD A RICH COLOUR TO A LATE-SEASON BORDER*

13 *TULIPA* 'MERLOT'
A late, lily-flowered tulip, in a rich shade of burgundy, that works well in combination with other bulbs and with mid-height and tall perennials. **H** 40-50cm. **S** 15cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

14 *TULIPA ORPHANIDEA* WHITTALLII GROUP
This bronze-red, wild tulip provides an unusual contrast to early perennial beddings. **H** 35cm. **S** 15cm. **C** Perfect in well-drained soil and gravel; full sun. **SI** April – May. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

15 *TULIPA* 'PINK DIAMOND'
A late-flowering, pink tulip that combines well with perennials. **H** 50-70cm. **S** 15cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

16 *TULIPA UNDULATIFOLIA*
An elegant wild tulip. Its tomato-red petals, which are margined with yellow, are up to 7cm long. An eye-catching addition to a gravel garden. **H** 35cm. **S** 15cm. **C** Well-drained soil and gravel; full sun. **SI** April – May. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

4 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS; 5 MARIANNE MAJERUS; 8 JASON INGRAM; 9 FIONA RICE / GAP PHOTOS

Foliage and ferns

17 *ALCHEMILLA EPIPSILA*
A low-growing alchemilla that is perfect for groundcover. Makes a tidy edging plant with sprays of bright lime-green flowers. Orange autumn foliage. **H** 30cm. **S** 20cm. **C** Moist soils; full sun or part shade. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H7.

18 *ANAPHALIS TRIPLINERVIS*
Silvery grey foliage adds light to any border. Its pretty, papery-white flowers are a bonus to the autumn border. AGM. **H** 30cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** All summer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

19 *ARUNCUS* 'HORATIO'
An eye-catching plant that boasts spikes of creamy-white flowers on red stems above fresh green foliage. **H** 90cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Moisture-retentive soil; full sun or part shade. **SI** June. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.

20 *ASARUM EUROPAEUM*
This evergreen perennial with glossy, kidney-shaped green leaves creates an attractive groundcover that is the perfect backdrop for plants such as *Anticlea elegans* and lilies. AGM. **H** 10-15cm. **S** 25cm. **C** Humus-rich moist soil; part shade. **SI** Year round. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.

21 *BRUNNERA MACROPHYLLA* 'BETTY BOWRING'
Sprays of tiny, pure-white flowers on bare ground are followed by large, heart-shaped, dark-green leaves. Lovely groundcover that combines beautifully with narcissi. **H** 30-40cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Moist soil; part shade. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-7b.

22 *CRAMBE MARITIMA*
As its common name sea kale suggests, this is a plant native to coastal areas, and tolerant of salt. Its attractive leaves are large and grey-green in colour with a wavy margin. In late summer it produces huge clusters of sweetly scented flowers. Best used as a single plant at the front of a border. **H** 60cm. **S** 60cm. **C** Well-drained soil with gravel; full sun. **SI** May – June. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

23 *EPIMEDIUM X RUBRUM*
An evergreen groundcover with leaves that are tinted red in spring and autumn. The thin rhizomes allow other plants, such as lilies, peonies and trilliums, to thrive among it. AGM. **H** 20cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Leafy and moist soil; part shade. **SI** All summer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

24 *HEUCHERA* 'OBSIDIAN'
A striking new semi-evergreen cultivar with deep-purple, almost black leaves and sprays of small, cream flowers in late summer. Provides a real contrast plant for pale colours, and works especially well when grown alongside astrantias, lamiums and *Veronica gentianoides*. **H** 25cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Good soil; part shade. **SI** All summer. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b. ▷

10, 13, 15, 19 & 23 JASON INGRAM

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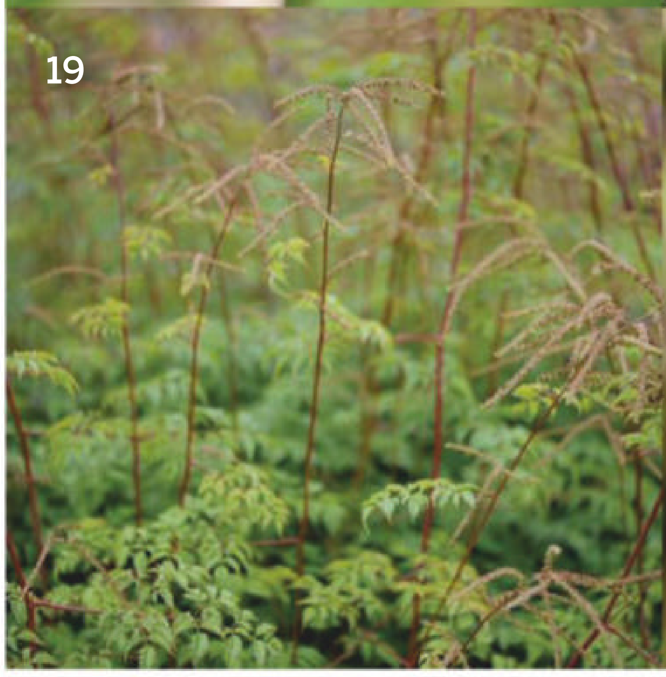
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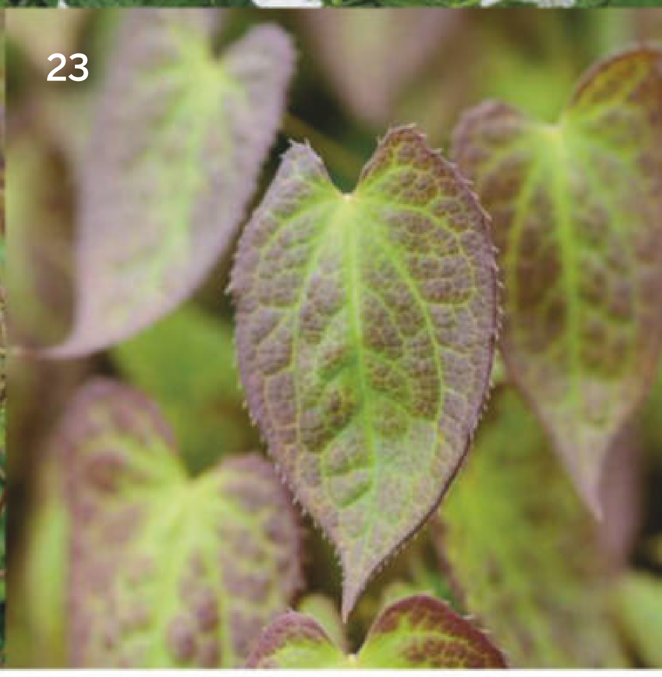
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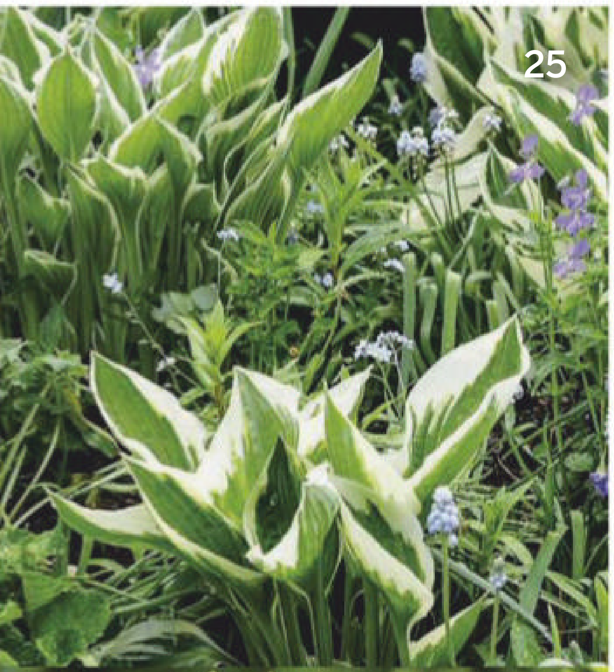
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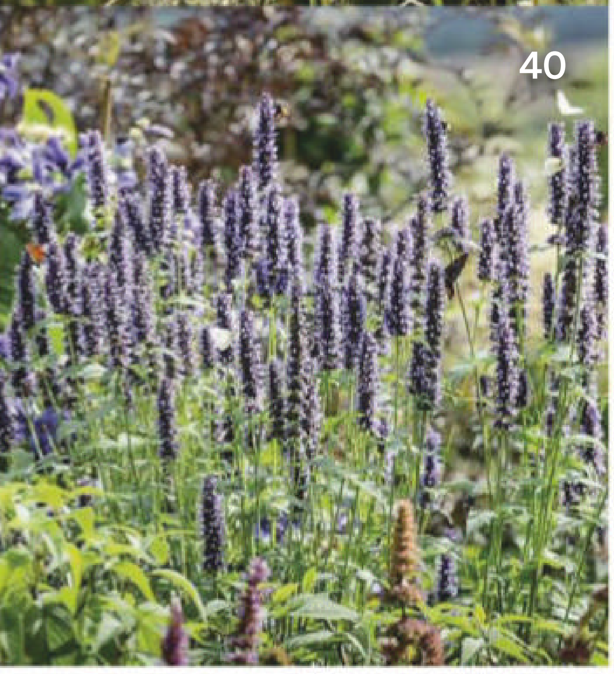
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▷ **25 *HOSTA* 'PATRIOT'**
A very attractive and popular hosta that produces tall mounds of large and oval-shaped, dark-green leaves, which have a distinctive white margin. In late summer these are joined by spikes of lavender-blue flowers. Combines well with violets and *Euphorbia dulcis*. AGM. **H** 30-40cm. **S** 30-40cm. **C** Well-drained, humus-rich soil; moderate shade. **SI** All summer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

26 *HOSTA* 'PRAYING HANDS'
Unusual hosta with upright mounds of narrow, tightly folded, olive-green leaves that have a gold margin. Use alongside ferns such as *Polypodium vulgare*. AGM. **H** 30-40cm. **S** 30-40cm. **C** Well-drained, humus-rich soil; moderate shade. **SI** All summer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

27 *HOSTA* 'ROYAL STANDARD'
A clump-forming hosta with glossy, ribbed, bright-green leaves. In late summer, trumpet-shaped, pure-white flowers, which are highly scented and tinged with lilac, are held on tall spikes. **H** 60cm. **S** 1m. **C** Moist but well-drained, humus-rich, soil; part shade. **SI** July. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

28 *MATTEUCCIA ORIENTALIS*
Known as the Asian ostrich fern, this is more upright than *Matteuccia struthiopteris*. It is a rhizomatous, deciduous fern that is perfect for waterside planting. One of my favourites. AGM. **H** 70-80cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Moist, neutral soil; part to full shade. **SI** All summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

29 *ONOCLEA SENSIBILIS*
In spring, pale-green fronds unfurl from red-green shoots. In moist conditions the creeping rhizomes will cover the ground. Combines beautifully with pulmonarias. AGM. **H** 40-60cm. **S** 40-60cm. **C** Moist soils; part to full shade. **SI** All summer. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

30 *POLYPODIUM VULGARE*
This evergreen fern is an upright but creeping plant with triangular leaflets. **H** 20-30cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Moist neutral soil; part shade to full sun. **SI** All summer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

31 *STACHYS BYZANTINA* 'SILVER CARPET'
Its furry, silver-grey leaves form an excellent groundcover that works well planted en masse or as an edging plant. It rarely produces flowers. **H** 20cm. **S** 90cm. **C** Fairly fertile, well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** All summer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

32 *WALDSTEINIA TERNATA*
A compact groundcover that produces rosettes of strawberry-like leaves. These semi-evergreen leaves contrast with the small, yellow flowers that appear in May. Happy in full sun, provided there is shade from shrubs, but best in shade. **H** 10cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** Year round. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

Grasses

33 *CALAMAGROSTIS BRACHYTRICHA*
Forms a clump of glossy green, linear leaves that turn yellow in autumn. In late summer purple-tinged flower plumes, emerge which fade to create a silvery winter silhouette. AGM. **H** 1-1.5m. **S** 50cm-1m. **C** Moist, well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** Year round. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

34 *HAKONECHLOA MACRA*
This clump-forming grass with bamboo-like, bright-green leaves provides a soft structure to borders. Planted en masse it creates a lush backdrop for thalictrums, irises and spring bulbs. AGM. **H** 35-70cm. **S** 50-80cm. **C** Moist, peaty soil; part shade. **SI** June. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

35 *MOLINIA CAERULEA* 'EDITH DUDSZUS'
A structural grass with dense, narrow upright leaves that turn an orange-yellow in late autumn. In late summer it produces slender plumes of dark-purple spikelets on purple-black stems. **H** 90cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** Spring to autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

36 *MOLINIA CAERULEA* SUBSP. *ARUNDINACEA* 'TRANSPARENT'
Forms a cone of green foliage, with feathery, purple spikelets that create an airy feel in late summer. You only need one or two plants to add light and shimmer to the border. **H** 1.8m. **S** 50cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun or part shade. **SI** June – November. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

37 *SESLERIA NITIDA*
My signature grass, which produces mounds of spiky, blue-green leaves, topped in late spring by attractive, white flowerheads. Good for edging borders. **H** 40-50cm. **S** 35cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** Year round. **HR** USDA 5a-8b.

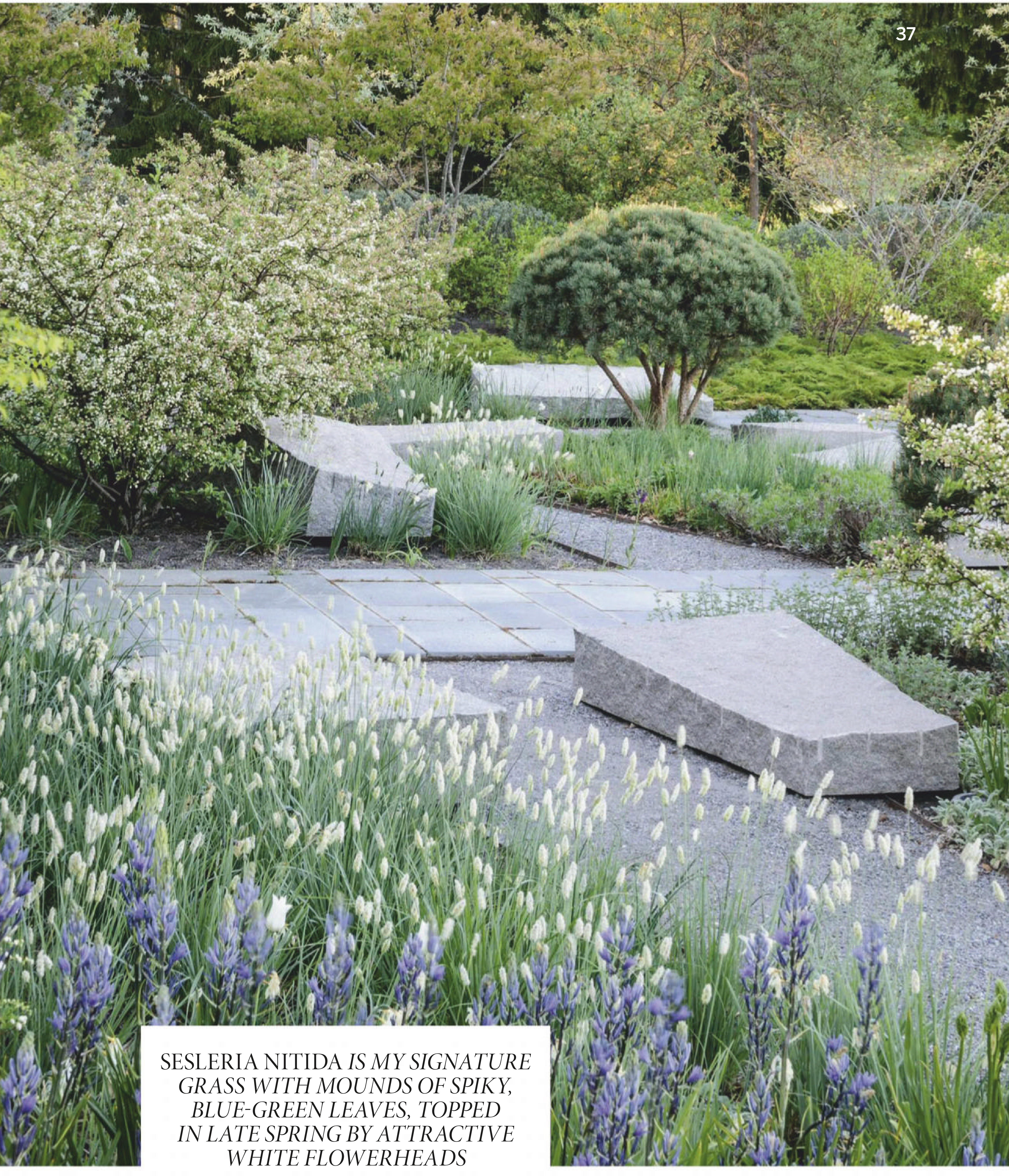
Perennials

38 *ACHILLEA PTARMICA* 'BOULE DE NEIGE'
In summer it produces a profusion of small, white pom-pom flowers held in large clusters above dark-green leaves. It spreads easily from creeping rhizomes, forming a lush backdrop to any perennial planting. **H** 40cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Most soils; full sun. **SI** June – July. **HR** USDA 3a-9b.

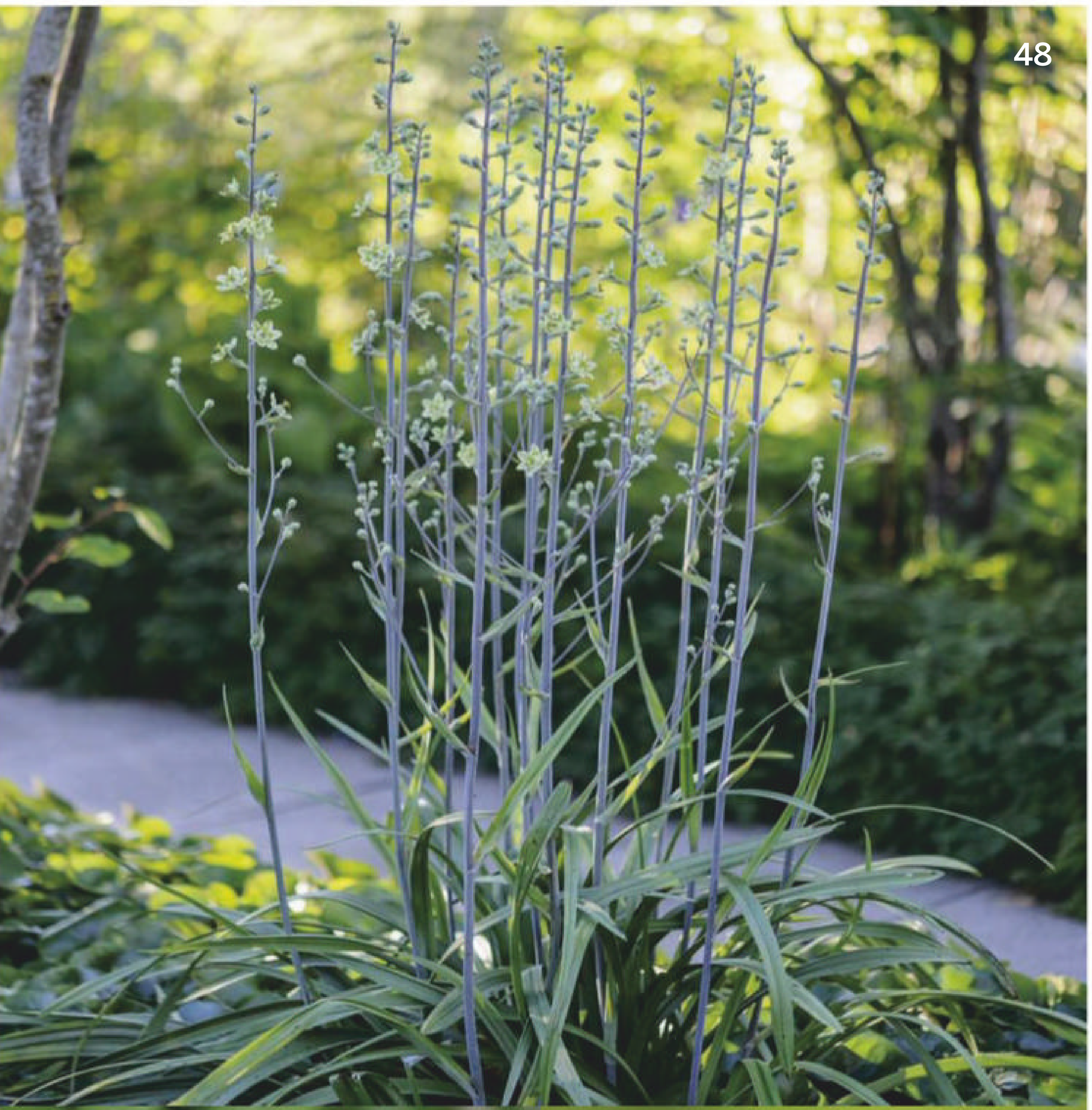
39 *ACTAEA SIMPLEX* 'BRUNETTE'
Cream-coloured flower spikes, which are held above attractive, dark foliage on slender purple stems, have a sweet perfume. Loved by bees. Likes shade but foliage colours better in full sun. AGM. **H** 1.2-2m. **S** 80cm. **C** Moisture-retentive soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** Autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

40 *AGASTACHE* 'BLACK ADDER'
An elegant addition to the late-season garden, upright over winter. Loved by bees and butterflies. **H** 60cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** June – September. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b. ▷

25, 33, 37 & 40 JASON INGRAM; 29 CLAIRE TAKACS



SESLERIA NITIDA *IS MY SIGNATURE GRASS WITH MOUNDS OF SPIKY, BLUE-GREEN LEAVES, TOPPED IN LATE SPRING BY ATTRACTIVE WHITE FLOWERHEADS*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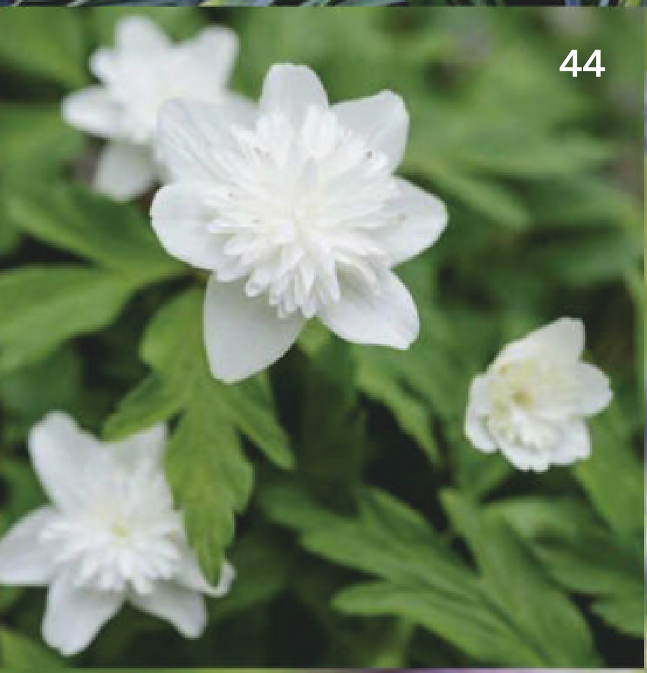
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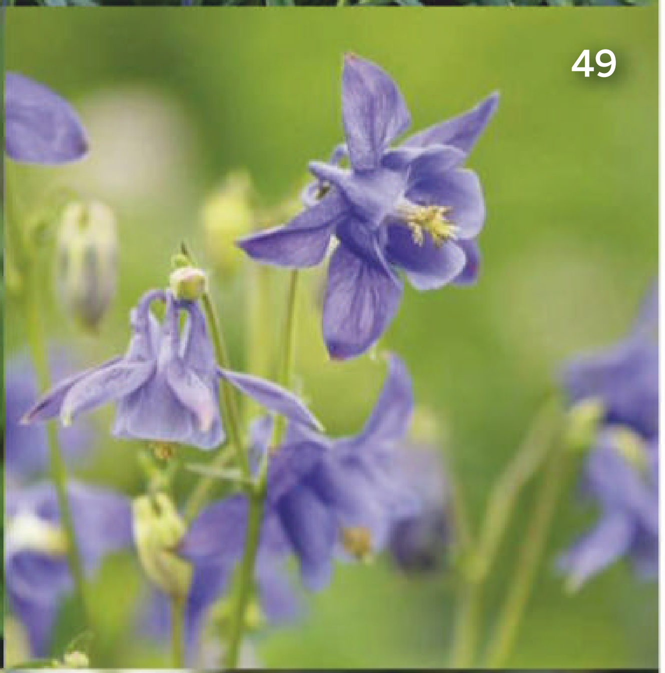
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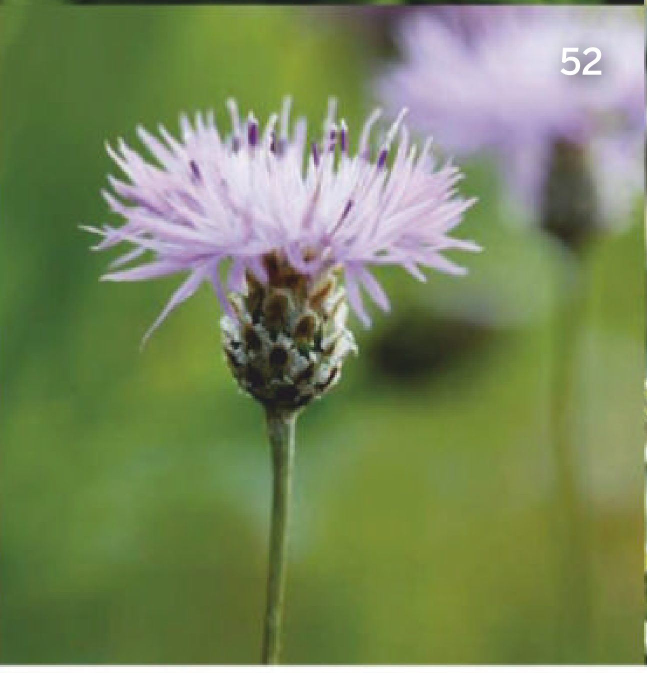
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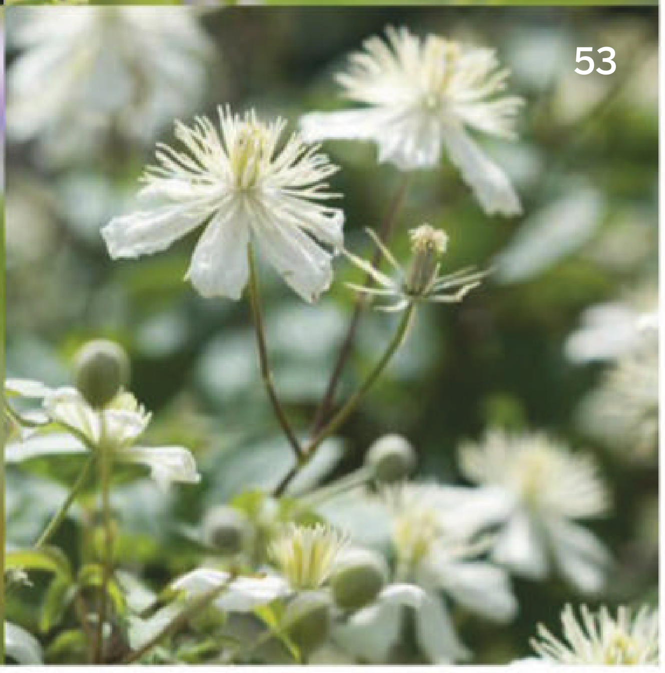
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▷ **41 *AMSONIA TABERNAEMONTANA* VAR. *CILIATA* 'BLUE ICE'**
A long-flowering plant that produces clusters of beautiful, pale-blue flowers. Leaves turn buttery gold in the autumn. Best grown in drifts in woodland areas. **H** 50-70cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Almost any soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** Early summer. **HR** USDA 4a-9b.

42 *ANEMONE* X *HYBRIDA* 'HONORINE JOBERT'
A tall autumn anemone with a lovely upright structure and flowers of pure-white petals, surrounding a boss of golden stamens. Looks gorgeous grown in part shade. **H** 1.5m. **S** 60cm. **C** Fertile, well-drained soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** August – September. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

43 *ANEMONE NEMOROSA* 'ROBINSONIANA'
A slow-growing anemone with pale-blue flowers in spring that practically glow in the shade. **H** 15cm. **S** 50cm. **C** Moist, humus-rich soil; part shade. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

44 *ANEMONE NEMOROSA* 'VESTAL'
In my garden, this woodland anemone forms a robust white carpet beneath a hazel tree. A beautiful partner for pulmonarias and primulas. AGM. **H** 15cm. **S** 50cm. **C** Moist, humus-rich soil; part shade. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

45 *ANEMONE* 'RUFFLED SWAN'
Tricky to grow, but one of the best new hybrids. Its white flowers with yellow stamens have a grey-purple streak along the reverse. **H** 40-60cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Well drained, humus-rich soil; best in part shade. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H5.

46 *ANEMONE SYLVESTRIS*
A lovely spring-flowering anemone that forms dense colonies of white flower in woodland areas. Easy to grow it looks lovely in masses. **H** 15-20cm. **S** 15-20cm. **C** Easily grown in moist, in semi shade, hardy. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

47 *ANTHRISCUS SYLVESTRIS* 'RAVENSWING'
A purple form of the common cow parsley, with creamy-white umbels held above black-purple leaves in late spring. Gives a natural feeling to any border. **H** 1m. **S** 45cm. **C** Moist, well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** May – June. **HR** RHS H6.

48 *ANTICLEA ELEGANS*
Formerly known as *Zigadenus elegans*, this is one of my favourite flowers. Its small, star-like, green-white flowers are held on tall, upright stems above grass-like foliage, but beware all parts are highly poisonous. **H** 25-60cm. **S** 35cm. **C** Humus-rich, well-drained soil; part shade. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H3.

49 *AQUILEGIA* 'HENSOL HAREBELL'
This is possibly the best blue aquilegia available with delicate-looking flowers held on strong stems. It is self-seeding but short lived. **H** 50-60cm. **S** 30-40cm. **C** Reasonable soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** June. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

44 & 48 JASON INGRAM; 49 & 53 JOANNA KOSSAK / GAP PHOTOS; 52 ANNAÏCK GUITTENY

50 *ASTER AMELLUS* 'KING GEORGE'
Covered in daisy-like violet-blue flowers, this bushy herbaceous perennial is synonymous with autumn. **H** 50cm. **S** 50cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** August – September. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

51 *CAMPANULA LATIFOLIA* VAR. *MACRANTHA* 'ALBA'
An elegant, short-flowering white cultivar, lovely in woodlands. Self seeding. **H** 1m. **S** 40cm. **C** Moist but well-drained soil; flowers longer in part shade. **SI** June – July. **HR** USDA 4a-8b.

52 *CENTAUREA BELLA*
Forms a mound of silvery-green divided leaves. Small, shaggy, pink flowers throughout summer. Good in gravel gardens and as an edging plant. **H** 25cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** All summer. **HR** USDA 5a-9b.

53 *CLEMATIS* 'PAUL FARGES'
A vigorous, deciduous climber with fragrant, single, white flowers that last from midsummer to early autumn. AGM. **H** 5-6m. **S** 3m. **C** Humus-rich, well-drained soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** May – September. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

> *WITH SMALL, GREEN-WHITE FLOWERS HELD ON TALL, UPRIGHT STEMS,* ANTICLEA ELEGANS *IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITES FLOWERS*

54 *CONVALLARIA MAJALIS*
With its scented, waxy white flowers, lily of the valley is the perfect woodland plant. Needs a really leafy, moist soil to develop good mats of rhizomes. Beautiful when allowed to cover a large area. Be careful as all parts are poisonous. AGM. **H** 15-30cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Moist leafy soil; part to full shade. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

55 *ECHINACEA PURPUREA* 'AVALANCHE'
A pure-white form of the North American coneflower. Self-seeding but short lived, it is a favourite of pollinating insects. **H** 45cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

56 *ERYNGIUM PLANUM* 'BLAUKAPPE'
A useful structural plant for dry areas, forming large clumps of stems in dry places and dark-blue flowers with sticky, blue-grey bracts. **H** 80cm-1m. **S** 30cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

57 *EUPHORBIA DULCIS* 'CHAMELEON'
One of the best purple-leaved perennials for a cold climate. This self-seeding spurge has stunning burgundy foliage, which gets darker in autumn, and small, yellow flowers. Looks fabulous grown alongside violets and alchemillas. **H** 30-50cm. **S** 35cm. **C** Moist but well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** All summer. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

58 *EURYBIA* X *HERVEYI*
Michaelmas daisy with flowers in various shades of violet blue. Works best when grown alongside plants that have a strong structure, such as *Hylotelephium* 'Matrona'. **H** 60-70cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Most soils; full sun to part shade. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

59 *GENTIANA MAKINOI* 'ROYAL BLUE'
One of the best late-flowering plants for a cool climate, with buds and flowers in an intense blue. **H** 70cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Well-drained, heavy soil; part shade. **SI** August – September. **HR** USDA 6a-8b.

60 *GEUM* 'SCARLET TEMPEST'
A relatively new geum with striking, semi-double flowers that are tomato red with an apricot flush above clumping, mid-green foliage. Deadhead regularly and you will have flowers from May to first frosts. Works well against a fresh-green background. **H** 40-50cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Any good free-draining soil; full sun. **SI** May to first frost. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-7b.

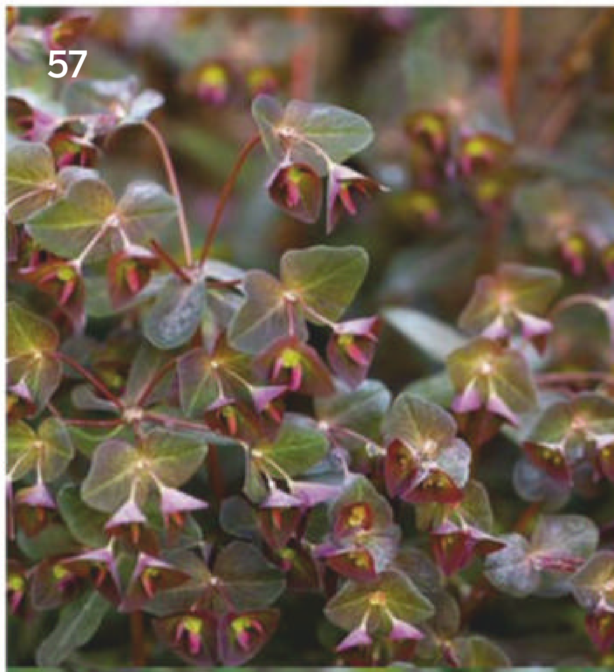
61 *GILLENIA TRIFOLIATA* 'PINK PROFUSION'
A North American species that is great for lighting up a shady border with clouds of butterfly-like, soft-pink flowers atop purple stems. In autumn the foliage turns red. **H** 1-1.2m. **S** 50cm. **C** Any well-drained soil; sun or part shade. **SI** July. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

62 *GYPSOPHILA PANICULATA* 'BRISTOL FAIRY'
Old cultivar with panicles of small, white double flowers. Perfect partner for roses, nepetas, echinaceas and gentianas. **H** 80cm-1m. **S** 50cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

63 *HELLEBORUS NIGER*
Its large, white flowers, with a central boss of yellow, appear above dark, leathery evergreen foliage from midwinter to early spring. **H** 20-30cm. **S** 25cm. **C** Humus-rich, alkaline soil; part shade. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

64 *HEMEROCALLIS CITRINA*
Robust, clump-forming daylily with beautiful grass-like foliage and large, trumpet-shaped, fragrant, yellow flowers. **H** 75cm. **S** 75cm. **C** Moist but well-drained, humus-rich soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** August – September. **HR** USDA 3a-9b.

65 *HESPERIS MATRONALIS* VAR. *ALBIFLORA*
A biennial, but self-seeding, sweet rocket that easily naturalises. Fragrant, spring flowers are produced in large showy terminal racemes that can be 30cm tall. Can be invasive. Flowers for longer in part shade. **H** 1-1.25m. **S** 45cm. **C** Moist but well-drained soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** May. **HR** USDA 3 to 8b. ▷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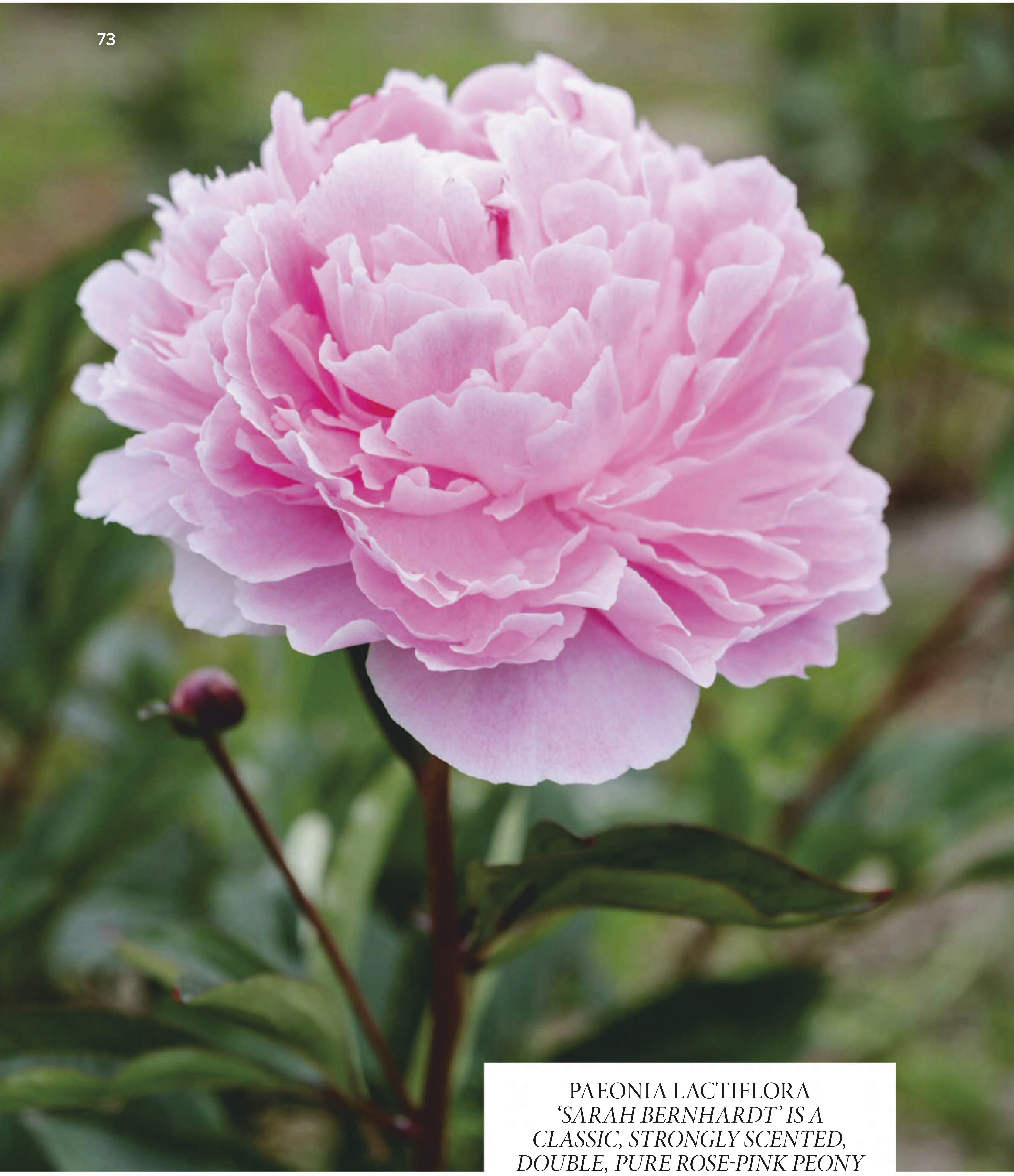
57 ANNE GILBERT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 59 MARTIN HUGHES-JONES / GAP PHOTOS; 61 MAAYKE DE RIDDER; 65 JASON INGRAM



PAEONIA LACTIFLORA *'SARAH BERNHARDT' IS A CLASSIC, STRONGLY SCENTED, DOUBLE, PURE ROSE-PINK PEONY*

▷ **66 *HYLOTELEPHIUM* 'MATRONA'**
Robust, sedum with broad leaves and an upright habit. Large, flat, green buds open to rose-pink flowers in late summer and early autumn, and last for several months. Dried flowerheads add a hint of colour and structure in winter. **H** 50cm. **S** 50cm. **C** Any well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

67 *HYLOTELEPHIUM SPECTABILE* 'ICEBERG'
Domed clusters of white flowers open from greenish-white buds in late summer. Remains upright throughout winter when the dried flowerheads look stunning covered in frost. **H** 45cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Any well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

68 *IRIS* 'RUFFLED VELVET'
A useful dark, purple-red iris for growing near water or in a moist, but not waterlogged, border. Best used in large groups. **H** 80cm. **S** 35cm. **C** Moist, rich soil; full sun or part shade. **SI** June. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

69 *IRIS* 'SILVER EDGE'
A violet-blue iris, with silvery white edges. Looks beautiful when combined with white-edged hostas. AGM. **H** 70-80cm. **S** 35cm. **C** Moist soil; full sun. **SI** June. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

70 *MECONOPSIS BAILEYI*
The delicate Himalayan poppy can be tricky to grow but is such a gorgeous shade of sky blue it is impossible to leave out. Prefers cool climate and part shade to develop well. AGM. **H** 1-1.2m. **S** 30-45cm. **C** Leafy moist acidic soil or peat bed; part shade. **SI** July. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-7b.

71 *NEPETA GRANDIFLORA* 'SUMMER MAGIC'
One of the best plants for bees and butterflies, with aromatic, lavender-blue flowers over greyish foliage. Cut back after the first flush and you'll have a second bloom in late summer. **H** 45cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** June – September. **HR** USDA 4a-9b.

72 *PAEONIA LACTIFLORA* 'DUCHESSE DE NEMOURS'
An old-fashioned, scented, double, creamy-white flowering peony and a real beauty. My favourite, especially among carpets of violets. AGM. **H** 70cm. **S** 70cm. **C** Sandy, well-drained soil; part shade. **SI** June – July. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

73 *PAEONIA LACTIFLORA* 'SARAH BERNHARDT'
A classic, strongly scented, double, pure rose-pink peony and my mother's favourite. Large flowers on strong upright stems and late flowering. AGM. **H** 80cm. **S** 80cm. **C** Sandy, well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** June – July. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

74 *PAEONIA LACTIFLORA* 'WHITE WINGS'
Open, single, white flowers with dense clusters of yellow stamens. **H** 70cm. **S** 70cm. **C** Sandy, well-drained, humus-rich soil; part shade. **SI** June – July. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b. ▷

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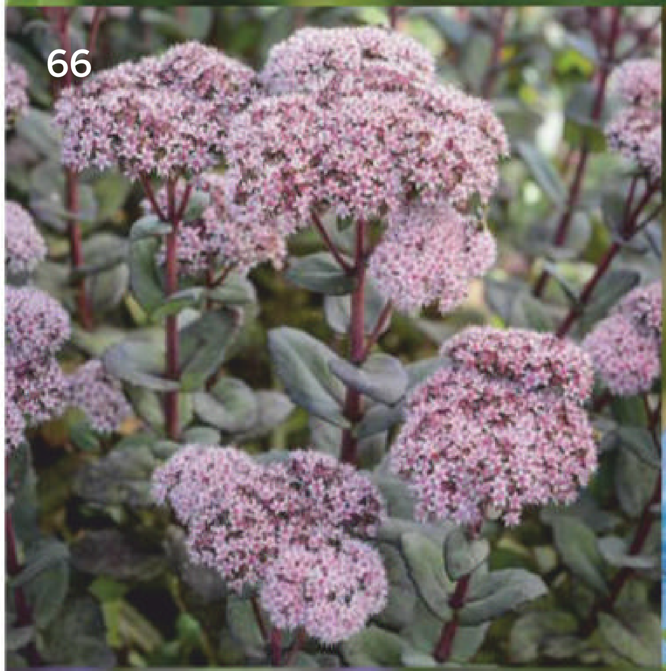
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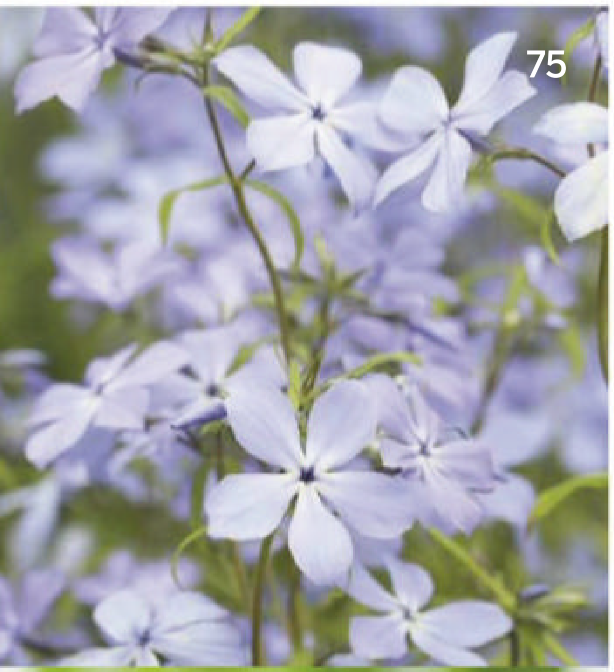
66, 69 & 73 JASON INGRAM; 70 IAN WEST / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 71 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS; 74 NOVA PHOTO GRAPHIK / GAP PHOTOS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▷ 75 *PHLOX DIVARICATA* 'CLOUDS OF PERFUME'

A beautiful, low-growing, spreading phlox with stems topped with clusters of fragrant, tubular, lavender-blue flowers, above dark-green foliage. Good edging plant. AGM. **H** 15-20cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Lightly moist but well-drained soil; part shade. **SI** May – June. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

76 *PHLOX PANICULATA* 'ROSA PASTELL'

Dense, conical flowerheads are covered in highly scented, creamy-pink flowers. Works beautifully when combined with veronicastrums and eryngiums. **H** 50-70cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Moist but well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** August – September. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

77 *PRIMULA ELATIOR*

Native to northern Europe, the oxlip is an excellent spring plant for woodland areas. Scented clusters of yellow flowers are held on erect stems. Combines beautifully with anemones and pulmonarias. AGM. **H** 10-15cm. **S** 15-20cm. **C** Moist soil; part shade. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

78 *PRIMULA FLORINDAE*

Originally from southeast Tibet, this is one of the largest primulas with stems that can reach more than a metre in height. Each tall stem is topped by usually one umbel of beautifully scented, nodding, yellow flowers. Looks stunning above green foliage plants, such as ferns and grasses. AGM. **H** 60cm-1.2m. **S** 30-45cm. **C** Moist soil; full or part shade. **SI** June – August. **HR** RHS H7.

79 *PULMONARIA* 'BLUE ENSIGN'

The best bright-blue cultivar, which works beautifully in any early spring combination. Much loved by bees. **H** 20-30cm. **S** 30-45cm. **C** Sandy, clay or average moist soil; part shade. **SI** May. **HR** RHS H6.

80 *SALVIA NEMOROSA* 'CARADONNA'

With its violet-blue flowers, *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' is one of my favourite salvias but I also like the pale-blue flowers of the similar *S.* 'Crystal Blue' and the vibrant-pink flowers and dark stems of *S.* x *sylvestris* 'Pink Field'. All combine beautifully with peonies, roses and astrantias. Cut back after flowering for a second flush. AGM. **H** 60cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Fertile, well-drained soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** June – August. **HR** RHS H7.

81 *SANGUISORBA MENZIESII*

A plant that is both tough and easy to grow, and adds form and structure to a border. Dark reddish-pink bottlebrush flowers spikes are held on strong stems above greyish-green leaves. Very attractive for insects, and dried seedheads look beautiful over winter when covered in frost. AGM. **H** 1m. **S** 40cm. **C** Free-draining soil with some moisture; full sun or part shade. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

82 *SANGUISORBA TENUIFOLIA* VAR. *ALBA*

Stunning plant with tall stems, bearing slender white bottle-brush flowers, that emerge from a low fern-like foliage. Good companion for actaeas, veronicastrums and irises. **H** 1.4m. **S** 60cm. **C** Moist soil; full sun. **SI** July – September.

83 *SCABIOSA CAUCASICA* 'FAMA DEEP BLUE'

An elegant flower, with large, ruffled, deep-blue, flowerheads, each with an attractive silvery centre. The flowers, which are much loved by bees and butterflies, appear above mounds of deeply divided, grey-green foliage. Makes an excellent cut flower, and is perfect for a gravel garden. **H** 70cm. **S** 35cm. **C** Best in alkaline, fairly fertile, well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** July – October. **HR** USDA 4a-9b.

84 *THALICTRUM* 'SPLENDIDE'

A cultivar that lives up to its name producing clouds of small, purplish pink flowers with creamy stamens, that contrast with its dark reddish-purple stems. It's a sterile hybrid that offers a long flowering period, although this will be shorter if grown in full sun. A similar, pure-white cultivar *T.* Splendide White (='Fr21034') is another excellent choice. **H** 1.2-1.8m. **S** 40m. **C** Moist, humus-rich soil; part to full shade. **SI** July – August. **HR** RHS H7.

85 *THALICTRUM* 'ELIN'

A Swedish cultivar that produces clouds of tiny, lilac flowers. Enormous if grown in moist soil but will turn yellow if it doesn't get enough water. A structural plant with huge, greyish pinnate leaves. AGM. **H** 2.5m. **S** 50cm. **C** Moist but well-drained soil; part to full shade. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

86 *TROLLIUS* X *CULTORUM* 'ALABASTER'

A creamy-yellow cultivar of a wild species found in northern Sweden. Clump forming with rounded flowers, it is works best in meadows among wildflowers. **H** 60cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Moist, humus-rich soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** May. **HR** USDA 3a-9b.

87 *VERONICA GENTIANOIDES*

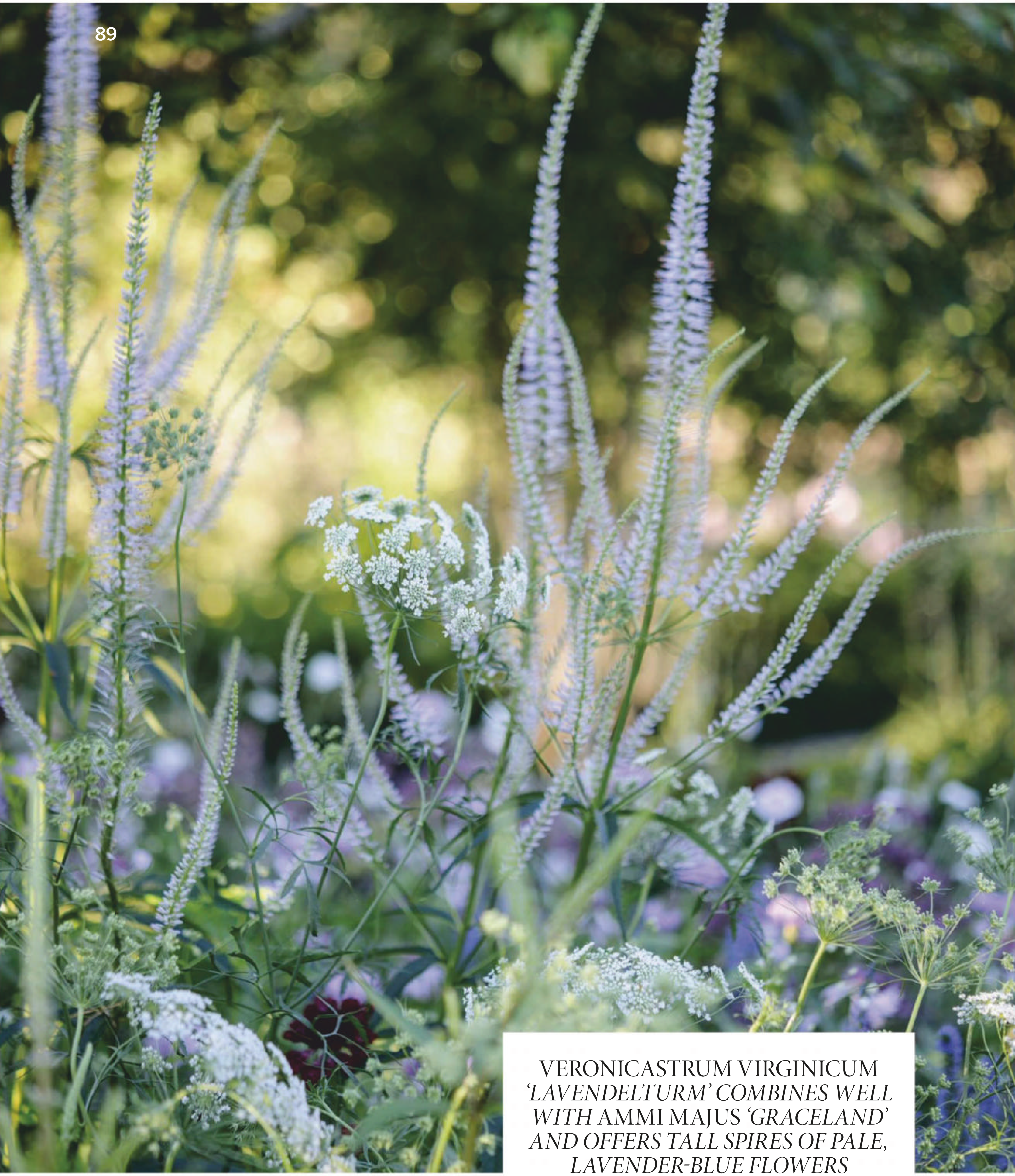
A mass of upright, pale-blue spikes, rise out of a dense mat of dark, evergreen foliage. Ideal for the front of a border. I also like the similar white cultivar called 'Tissington White'. **H** 60cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Any soil, prefers a moist, well-drained soil; full sun or part shade. **SI** June. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.

88 *VERONICASTRUM VIRGINICUM* 'ALBUM'

An American species that throws up slender, upright spires of elegant-looking flowers from dark-green foliage. This cultivar, with white flowers tinged with pale pink, looks especially elegant alongside sanguisorbas and phlox. AGM. **H** 1.2-1.5m. **S** 50cm. **C** Moist but well-drained soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** July – August. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b. ▷

75 MAX NE ADCOCK / GAP PHOTOS, 79, 81, & 87 JASON INGRAM; 83 JAN SMITH / GAP PHOTOS

THE UPRIGHT, PALE-BLUE SPIKES OF VERONICA GENTIANOIDES *RISE OUT OF A DENSE MAT OF DARK EVERGREEN FOLIAGE*



VERONICASTRUM VIRGINICUM *'LAVENDELTURM' COMBINES WELL WITH* AMMI MAJUS *'GRACELAND' AND OFFERS TALL SPIRES OF PALE, LAVENDER-BLUE FLOWERS*

▷ 89 *VERONICASTRUM VIRGINICUM* 'LAVENDELTURM'
Another *V. virginicum* cultivar that combines well with *Ammi majus* 'Graceland' and offers tall spires of pale, lavender-blue flowers. AGM. **H** 1.5m. **S** 50cm. **C** Any good soil; full sun or part shade. **SI** July – August. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

90 *VIOLA* 'BELMONT BLUE'
Sometimes sold as 'Boughton Blue', this dainty looking groundcover is both robust and easy to grow. Its large, pretty, violet-blue flowers have a small yellow eye, a slight veining and fine dark rays on the lower petals, and are held above a dense mat of oval evergreen leaves. Deadheading can prolong the flowering until autumn. **H** 10-20cm. **S** 15-25cm. **C** Almost any soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** April – July.

91 *VIOLA CORSICA*
One of the most beautiful violets, with large flowers that are a rich and deep violet-blue colour with a tiny yellow centre. It is hardy throughout most of Europe. Self-seeds easily and is reliably perennial. **H** 10-15cm. **S** 15-25cm. **C** Almost any soil; full sun to part shade. **SI** June – October. **HR** USDA 3a-9b.

Shrubs and trees

92 *CORYLUS AVELLANA* 'ROTBLÄTTRIGE ZELLERNUSS'
Beautiful, large, medium strong-growing hazel perfect for a woodland setting. Juvenile leaves are blood red, later turning green. Soft pink catkins in May. Red brown nuts in brown husks in autumn. **H** 4-6m. **S** 4-6m. **C** All soils; full sun to part shade. **SI** Spring catkins, autumn nuts. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

93 *CRATAEGUS* X *LAVALLEEI* 'CARRIEREI'
This small, upright hawthorn is a perfect small tree, with broad and glossy dark-green leaves that turn from yellow to orange in autumn. White flowers in midsummer are followed by holly-like orange-red berries that last well into winter. **H** 6-10m. **S** 4m. **C** Medium-heavy, dry to moist soils; full sun. **SI** June. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.

94 *HYDRANGEA PANICULATA* 'LE VASTERIVAL'
A medium-sized shrub, with attractive pure-white flowers that are slightly twisted like butterflies. Flowers remain white from July to September. **H** 2m. **S** 2m. **C** Prefers slightly acid soils. **SI** July – September. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

95 *MALUS* 'EVERESTE'
A beautiful crabapple with an open, pyramidal structure but one that also works as an espalier or fan-trained tree. Pink buds are followed by white flowers and then orange-red fruits that remain on the tree until February or until birds eat them. AGM. **H** 4-6m. **S** 8m. **C** Prefers a medium heavy acid to neutral soil; full sun. **SI** May blossom; autumn foliage and fruits. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

96 *ROSA MOYESII*
A shrub rose from northern China with dark-red single flowers that are followed by lovely flask-shaped, red hips. Ideal as a single rose in a border. **H** 2.5m. **S** 2m. **C** Nearly all soils, but prefers heavy with well-rotted manure/garden compost; full sun. **SI** June – July. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

97 *ROSA SPINOSISSIMA* 'PLENA'
An old-fashioned rose, bred in Sweden, with scented, half-double flowers that are creamy-white with yellow stamens. One that has been in my garden for 50 years. **H** 1.5m. **S** 1.5m. **C** Nearly all soils, but prefers heavy with well-rotted manure/garden compost; full sun. **SI** June.

98 *SORBUS ULLEUNGENSIS* 'DODONG'
A rowan that can be grown as multi-stemmed large shrub or small tree, with large, white flowers and huge, glossy, dark-green leaves that turn a fabulous autumn colour from orange to fiery red. **H** 8-10m. **S** 3-4m. **C** All well-drained soils; full sun or part shade. **SI** June. **HR** RHS H6.

> VIOLA CORSICA *IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VIOLETS, WITH LARGE, DEEP VIOLET-BLUE FLOWERS THAT HAVE A TINY YELLOW CENTRE*

99 *SYRINGA VULGARIS* 'KRASAVITSA MOSKVY'
A lilac that works as a large shrub or small tree, with pink buds that open into highly scented, large, double, white-pink flowers. Its Russian name translates as 'Beauty of Moscow'. AGM. **H** 3-5m. **S** 4-6m. **C** Moist, sandy, humus-rich, well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** June. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-7b.

100 *VIBURNUM OPULUS* 'ROSEUM'
Broadly upright, structured shrub, with round, white flowerheads in summer and wine-red foliage in autumn. AGM. **H** 4m. **S** 4m. **C** Moisture-retentive, rich soils, acid to alkaline, sun to part shade. **SI** June. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b. □

Reader offer
Readers can enjoy a 15 per cent discount on plants, bulbs and seeds at Crocus (**crocus.co.uk**), which stocks many of the plants chosen by Ulf. For details see page 113.

About the author
Ulf Nordfjell is an award-winning landscape architect, who is well known for the many public and private gardens he has created in his native Sweden and around the world. He won Gold at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2007, 2009 and 2013, and his 2009 Chelsea garden was awarded Best in Show. Find out more about his work and range of garden design accessories at **nordfjellcollection.se**

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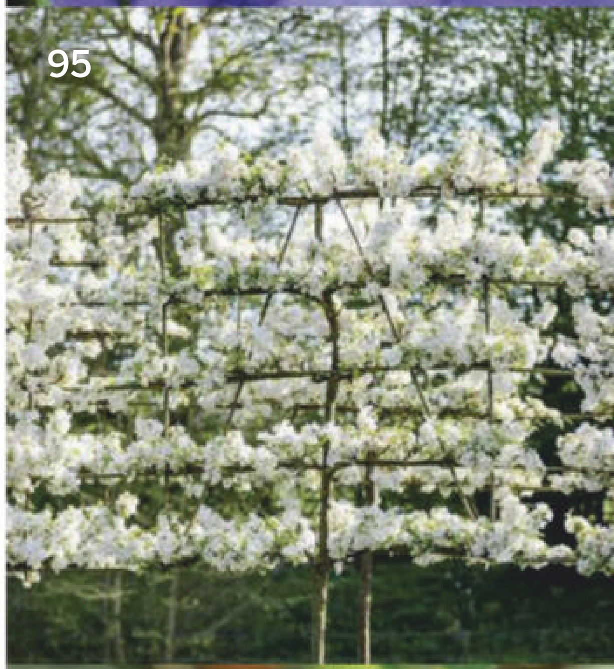
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89, 91 & 95 JASON INGRAM; 96 HOWARD RICE / GAP PHOTOS; 100 ARLETTA CWALINA / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO
MANY THANKS TO ROSY HARDY OF HARDY'S COTTAGE GARDEN PLANTS, FOR HER HELP IN COMPILING THIS FEATURE.

Against the crisp, contemporary architecture of a remodelled Victorian house in southwest London, award-winning designer Matt Keightley has played with perspective to create a sense of space in a small back garden, lushly planted for year-round interest

City sanctum

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PHOTOGRAPHS **MARIANNE MAJERUS**

London is full of Victorian terraced houses, with near-identical red-brick and white stucco façades. In some postcodes these properties are primped and pampered and change hands for millions, in others the brick has crumbled and the stucco peeled, and in Kew one such house has been given such a radical makeover that passers-by have been known to stop in the street.

The original brickwork and stucco, windows and door are all painted darkest grey. The interior has been transformed by architects McLaren.Excell with polished concrete, sleek oak panelling and a striking, pale-stone extension of intersecting chamfered forms punctured by huge picture windows opening on to a glorious garden – the latter the work of designer Matt Keightley.

In October 2017, when Matt first arrived on site, the garden contained a beautifully contorted magnolia, a fine specimen laburnum and a lot of builders' rubble. "It was a largely blank canvas with a great design brief," he says. "The owners were very clear about what they wanted – a serene retreat from the city, with places to sit, a decent outdoor kitchen, and a planting plan that was low maintenance." Their only other request was that the garden be ready to use by the following spring. "That time frame did put us under pressure, but we like a challenge," says Matt.

Six months later and bang on schedule, the garden was transformed. Echoing the interior, beautiful poured concrete forms the main hard landscape elements, shaped into polygonal terraces, a zig-zagging path, and a series of 'fins' that run up the full height of one wall and repeat at a low level across the width of the garden. The spaces in between are filled with a predominantly ▷

Below left Matt's masterly tapestry of predominantly green planting relies on foliage texture and form to provide year-round interest. Banking the soil up within the planting areas introduces additional drama and significantly increases the impact of the *Hakonechloa* and ferns grouped at the base of the mature, central magnolia.

Below right The tapered concrete fins, which run up the full height of one wall, were designed and fabricated by Matt and his team. After lengthy discussion, the clients chose to install an artificial 'green wall' between these fins. The chair is part of a range produced by outdoor furniture company Viteo.

IN BRIEF

What Private family garden.
Where Kew, southwest London.
Size 140 square metres.
Soil Good quality topsoil imported for the job.
Climate Maritime.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

green planting scheme designed for year-round interest with seasonal flourishes.

The design is an exercise in controlled simplicity and it succeeds thanks to some clever technicalities. “The paths subtly taper as they run away from the house to give the illusion of greater length,” says Matt. “We also used the magnolia to partially hide the farthest section of the garden, and excavated the barbecue terrace, which is paved with black slabs to emphasise the change in level. These are all classic tricks to make a small garden feel bigger.”

The borders have been banked up in places, creating an undulating surface that enlivens the overall effect, and French drains line the sides of the path to trap any run-off from rainwater. Lights set into seams in the concrete path highlight the cantilevered edge of the dining terrace and wash softly over the concrete ribs in the beds. “The only truly functional lighting is set in the wall by the outdoor kitchen, so you can see what’s on the barbecue, but generally the rule is to keep it subtle.”

It’s a principle that Matt has also applied to the design as a whole, although this is the sort of subtlety that builds on an awful lot of hard-earned experience in order to appear effortless. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Matt’s work at **rosebanklandscaping.co.uk**

Below, from left to right

The gnarled branches of a magnolia retained from the original garden convey an invaluable sense of character and age.

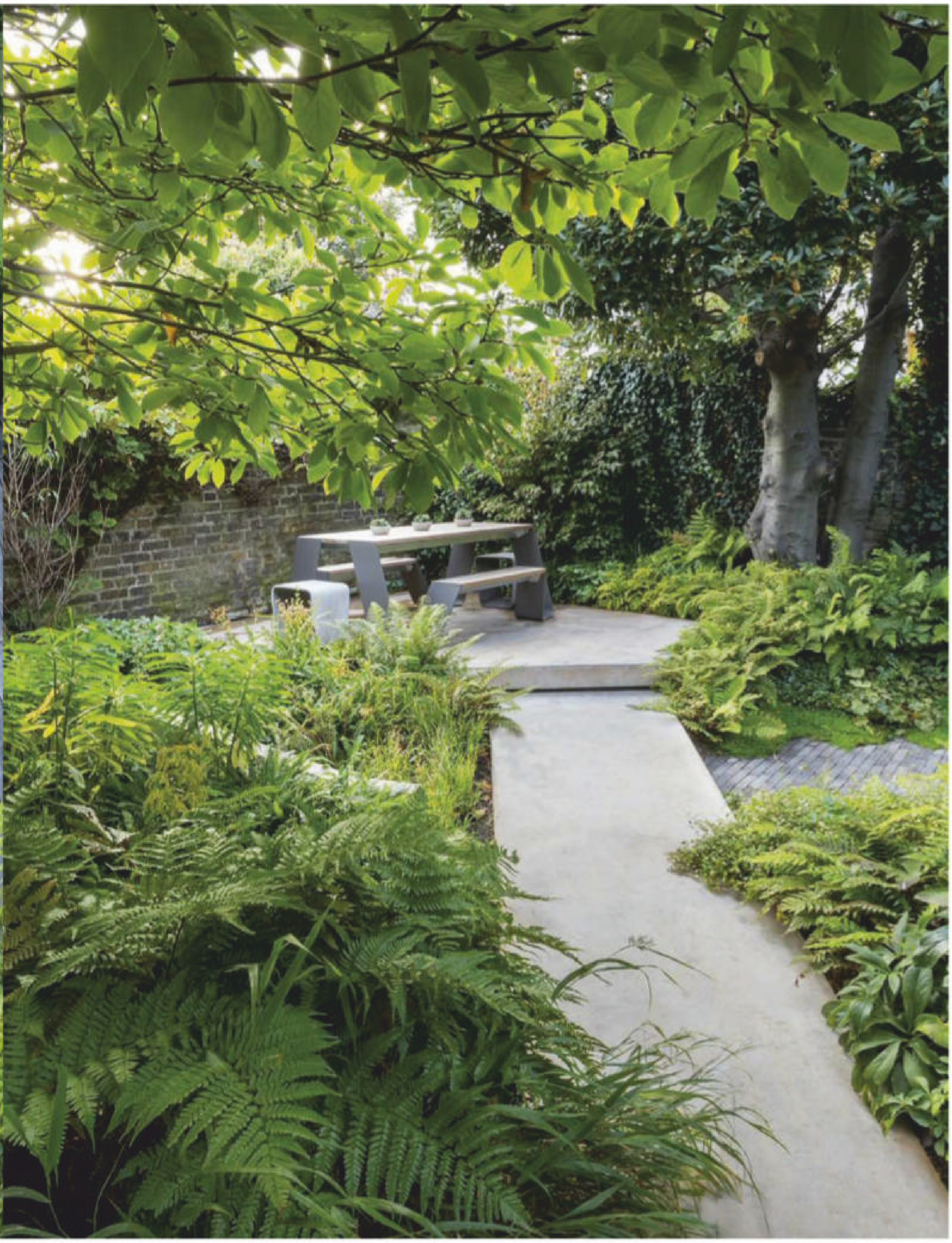
The outdoor kitchen is paved in narrow Vande Moortel blocks, which contrast with the pale, poured concrete elsewhere. The dark surface is softened by *Soleirolia soleirolii*, fringing a shade-loving combination of ferns, *Pachysandra terminalis* and *Alchemilla mollis*.

Exploiting the drama drawn from changes in levels, Matt has created a cantilevered raised platform for the dining area and sunk the adjacent kitchen area slightly below ground level. Concealed lights highlight these transitions at night.

PLANTING FOR YEAR-ROUND INTEREST

Matt's planting plan is based on interesting evergreen and structural plants. Two feathery, evergreen, soft shield ferns – the elegantly arching *Polystichum setiferum* and stiffly upright *Polystichum polyblepharum* – are used around the garden, combined with the dense rippled fronds of the hart's tongue fern, *Asplenium scolopendrium*, and several deciduous dryopteris ferns, including the striking copper-tinted *Dryopteris erythrosora*. These are threaded through with gently spreading *Pachysandra terminalis* and glossy *Asarum europaeum*, which gives excellent evergreen groundcover. Edging the sunken kitchen area, *Soleirolia soleirolii*, or mind-your-own-business, forms cushiony mounds that soften the hard edges of the concrete path.

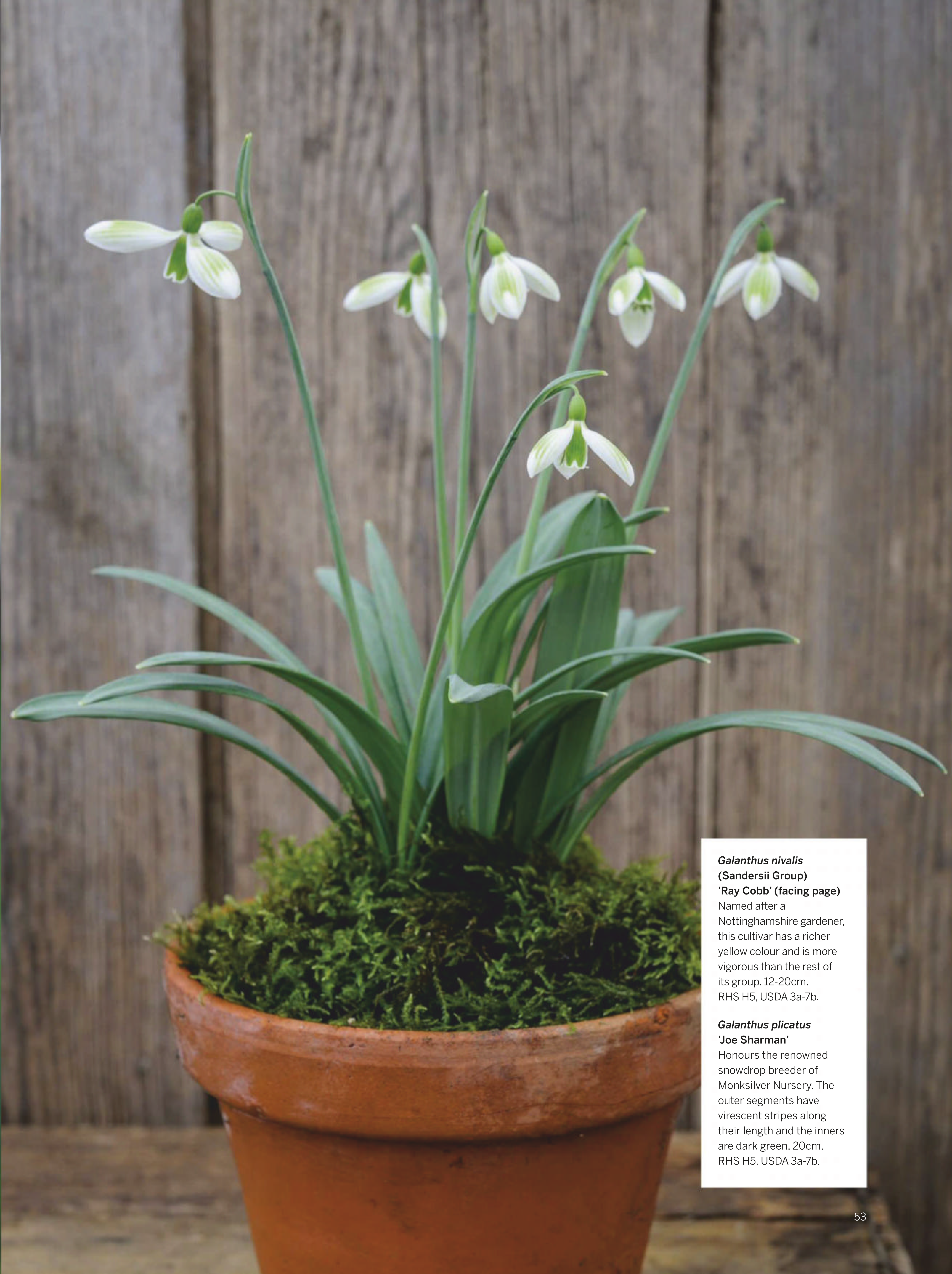
Other plants were chosen for their attractive foliage and seasonal flowers. Earliest to bloom are a collection of dark-flowered hellebores, followed by *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost', which in London holds on to its silvery patterned leaves all through winter, then produces a mass of dainty blue flowers in spring. Against this predominantly green backdrop, tulips, foxgloves, peonies, aqueligias, astrantias and anemones provide a succession of seasonal colour. "When planting a small garden, have the courage of your convictions and limit the number of different plants you include, so that you can repeat those you do decide to grow," says Matt. "That way you produce a scheme with real coherence and impact."



EVERLASTING LIFE

Since Elizabethan times, snowdrops have proliferated widely, spreading and hybridising in diverse and fascinating ways. Many galanthophiles have sought the ultimate snowdrop lover's accolade: to become a snowdrop immortal

WORDS **NAOMI SLADE** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**



***Galanthus nivalis* (Sandersii Group) 'Ray Cobb' (facing page)**
Named after a Nottinghamshire gardener, this cultivar has a richer yellow colour and is more vigorous than the rest of its group. 12-20cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

***Galanthus plicatus* 'Joe Sharman'**
Honours the renowned snowdrop breeder of Monksilver Nursery. The outer segments have virescent stripes along their length and the inners are dark green. 20cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

Brave flowers, emerging indomitable: snowdrops are an early herald of spring. A plant with links to the Gaelic spring festival Imbolc and February's Candlemas, rich in folklore, associated with angels. Even its arrival in Britain is mysterious. Snowdrops first appear in Gerard's *Herball* of 1597. A later incantation adds, 'These plants doe grow wild in Italie and the places adjacent, notwithstanding our London gardens have taken possession of them all, many years past.' A cultivated and cherished plant from the outset, therefore. Yet snowdrops keep another secret: for a small and select group of individuals, they hold the key to immortality.

Snowdrops are popular almost beyond measure. It takes little to become hooked and, while the plant was a niche interest 50 years ago, a horticultural hard core has given way to a thriving group of ordinary gardeners who tinker with, collect and, very often, breed their prize specimens. There are, it seems, more galanthophiles than ever before. But the immortals are a class apart. To have a plant named after you is one of the highest honours that horticulture can bestow. It indicates a regard and significance: one has arrived. But with snowdrops, particularly, once the plant bears your name, you are considered linked to it. It is your plant – while the plant lives, you live on.

Yet as in any fairy tale, there are rules. Immortality is not the sort of thing that one can elect for oneself. You need a fairy godmother or father – naming a plant after oneself is considered disgracefully bad form. Secondly, to be a true immortal you must have your whole name cited. Thus 'Barbara's Double' is not an immortal, nor is 'Wendy's Gold', though both were named after real people. But *Galanthus* 'Günter Waldorf', *G.* 'Alison Hilary', *G. elwesii* 'John Tomlinson' and *G. reginae-olgae* 'Naomi Slade' are legitimate.

As symbols of hope, rebirth and renewal, the little white flowers also give rise to a sympathetic magic of their own. In a darker, more sombre place there are snowdrop names that light a candle where they are most needed, keeping lost souls close and a spirit alive. *G. plicatus* 'Diggory' was named by Rosie Steele after her late son, while *G. plicatus* 'Sophie North' commemorates a child who was killed in the Dunblane massacre. Strict immortality criteria aside, one need not look far to realise that the cultivars read like a who's who of horticulture. From the Victorian boom of interest to the corresponding 20th-century burst, we see notable folk such as Bertram Anderson, Peter Gatehouse, Herbert Maxwell and David Shackleton acknowledged. As a rule, if a plant has stood the test of time or is named for someone important, then it is a performer.

Snowdrops are highly diverse and therein lies much of their appeal. Around 20 *Galanthus* species are native to a large area of Europe and western Asia and, when brought together, they hybridise promiscuously. The result is a fascinating box of delights, over 2,000 cultivars of seemingly infinite variety. Parentage is echoed in the shape of the leaves, strappy in *G. nivalis* cultivars, pleated in *G. plicatus* and twisted in *G. gracilis*. The flowers can be small and pointed, large and lavish, or suspended elegantly on the airiest of pedicels. Differences in height and the degree of doubling, the precise hue of stem and spathe and the configuration of markings on the internal and external petals, or segments, create a wealth of possibility. To this, breeders have added more esoteric variations: dramatic yellow markings or flowers with an orange flush; bouffant poculiform snowdrops with two sets of outer petals; and the reverse, triangular pterugiform snowdrops whose inner petticoats are boldly worn on top.

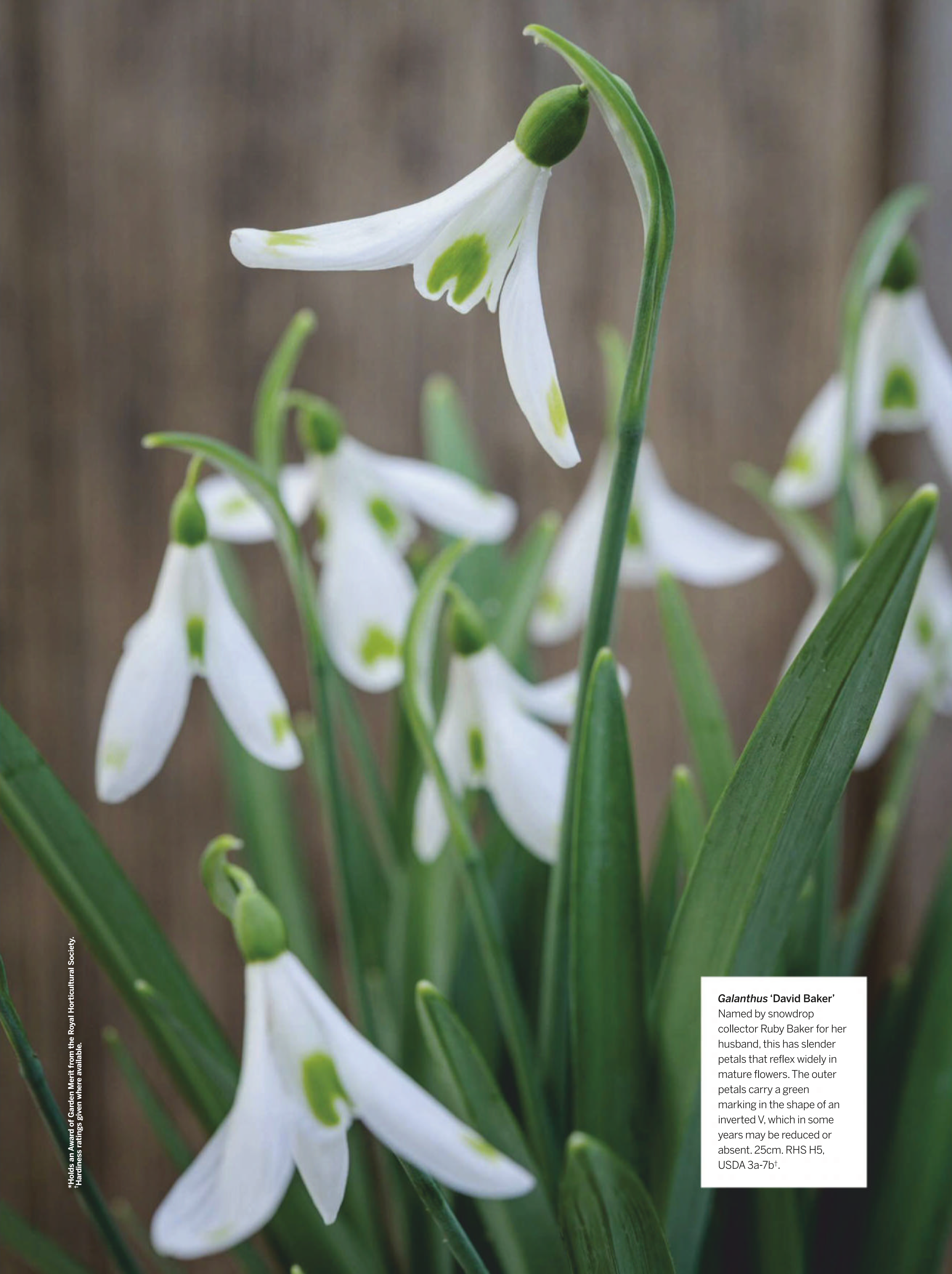
There is a strong culture of collecting and acquisition, and distinctive new arrivals are sought after. Snowdrops with green outer markings such as the elegant 'Joe Sharman' and the classic 'Green Tear' are highly desirable, while still more unusual variants can result in an explosion of interest and frantic online bidding from collectors. When gorgeous *G. plicatus* 'EA Bowles' was launched in 2011, a single bulb reached £357 at auction. A greater frenzy still met the first yellow-marked *G. woronowii* cultivar, 'Elizabeth Harrison', a bidding war won by Thomson & Morgan for £725.10. That record was smashed in 2015, when *G. plicatus* 'Golden Fleece', shaped like a pagoda with yellow splashes on the outer petals, sold for £1,390, and headlines about snowdrop mania thrilled a world beyond horticulture.

But back in the garden, a few awkward cultivars notwithstanding, they are generally easy to grow. Plant them where they will not be disturbed; an ideal spot is under deciduous trees where they can enjoy moderate dryness in summer but plenty of light and water in winter and spring. And they will happily naturalise in lawns – just allow leaves to die back before you mow. When in growth, and particularly in pots, they benefit from a regular dose of a high-potash fertiliser to bulk up the bulb for next year. Build a collection gradually, starting with distinctive, modestly priced bulbs with a track record of being good doers, and established cultivars such as *G.* 'Richard Ayres', *G.* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley', *G. plicatus* 'Percy Picton' and *G. nivalis* 'Francesca de Grammont'.

And when the season looks, Janus-like, to both future and past, and a sense of mortality creeps in with the dark and the cold, snowdrops arrive when they are most needed and least expected; heraldic, hopeful and imbued with a magic of their own.

Author Naomi Slade is a garden writer and photographer, and a snowdrop immortal, whose books include *The Plant Lover's Guide to Snowdrops* (Timber Press, 2014). Further immortals appear on the next five pages.

THANKS TO JOE SHARMAN OF MONKSILVER NURSERY, WHERE THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN, FOR HIS HELP WITH THIS FEATURE.



***Galanthus* 'David Baker'**
Named by snowdrop collector Ruby Baker for her husband, this has slender petals that reflex widely in mature flowers. The outer petals carry a green marking in the shape of an inverted V, which in some years may be reduced or absent. 25cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b†.

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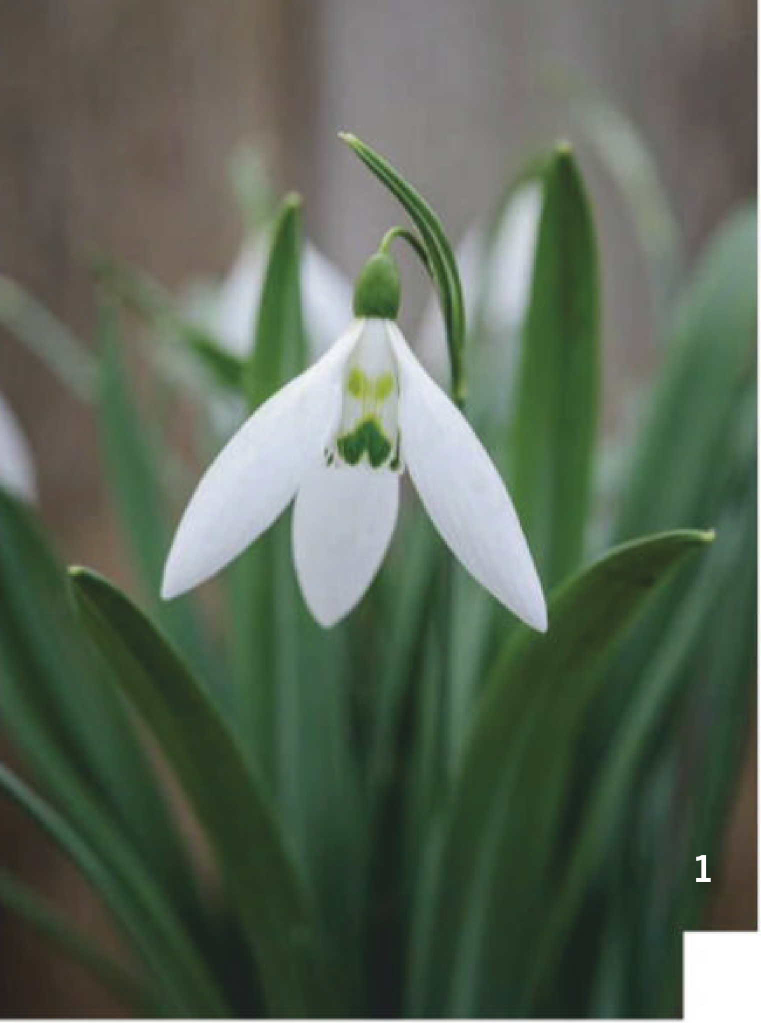
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.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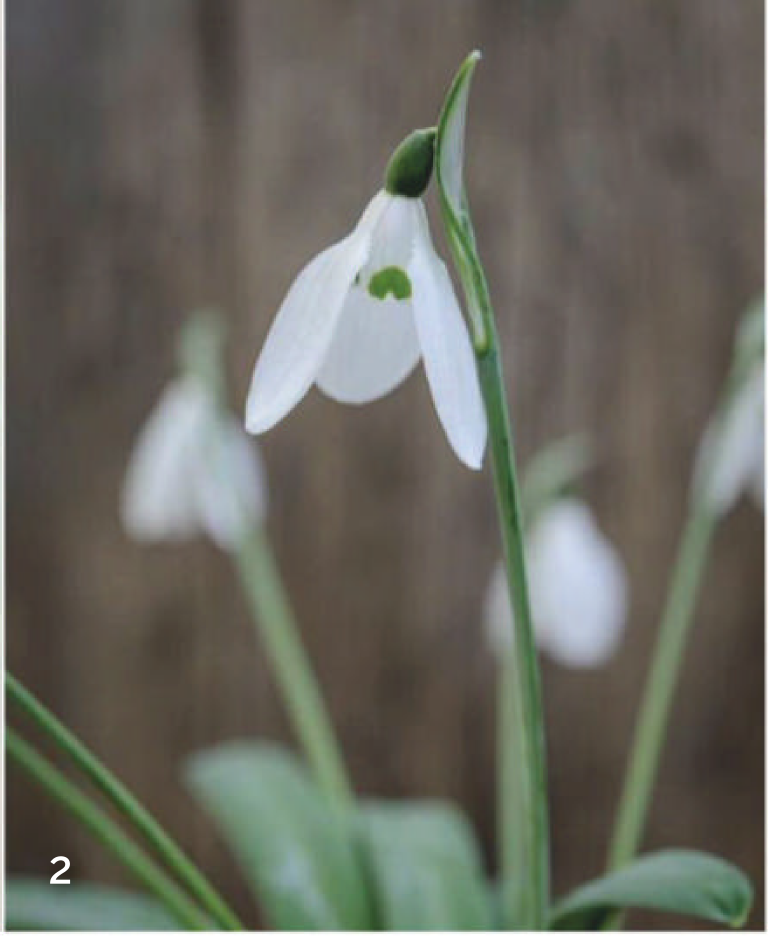
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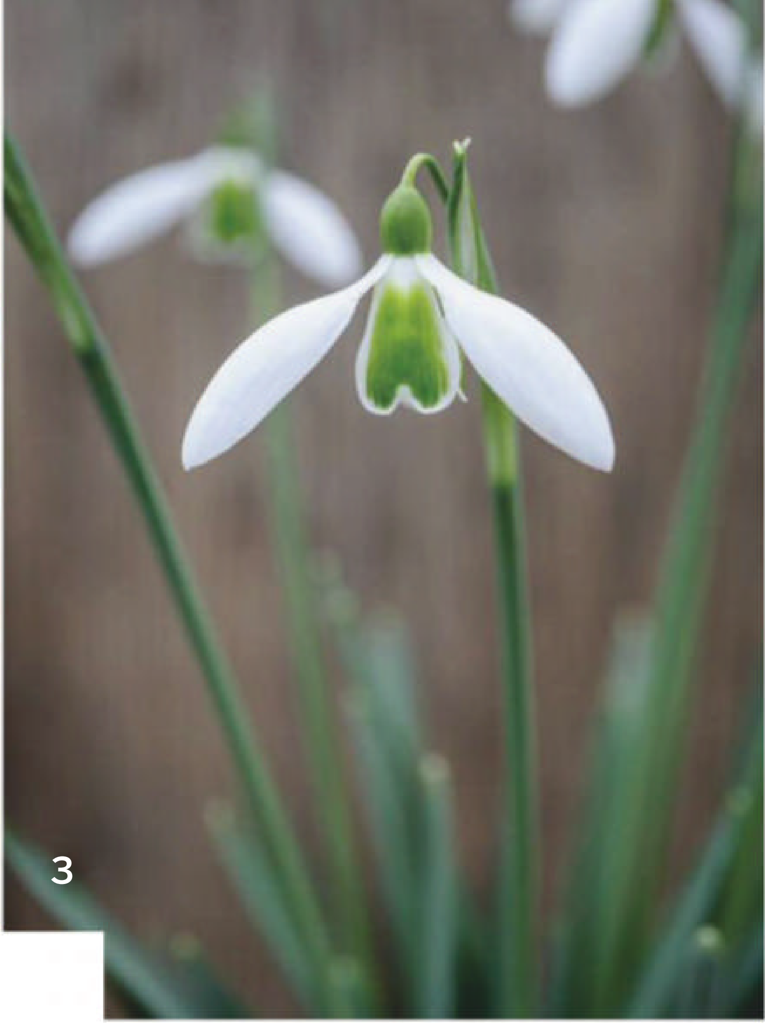
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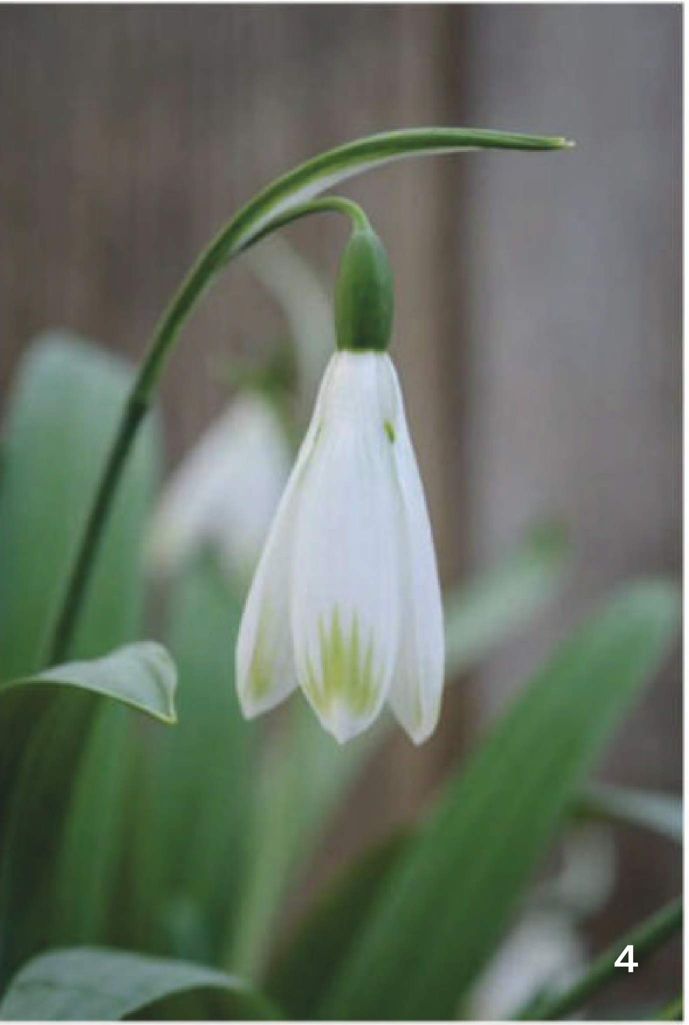
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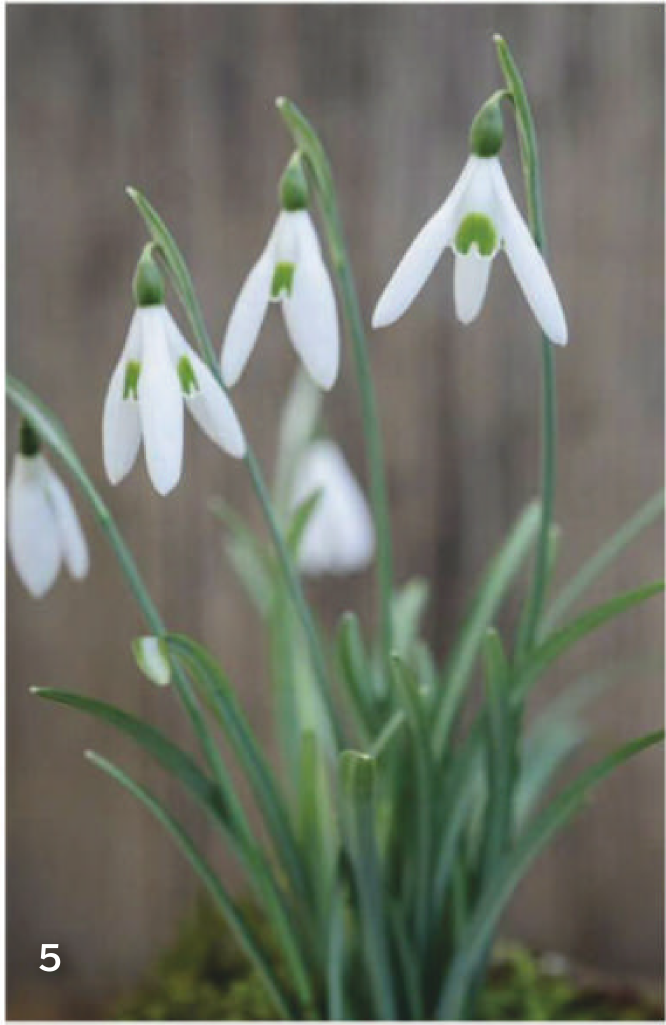
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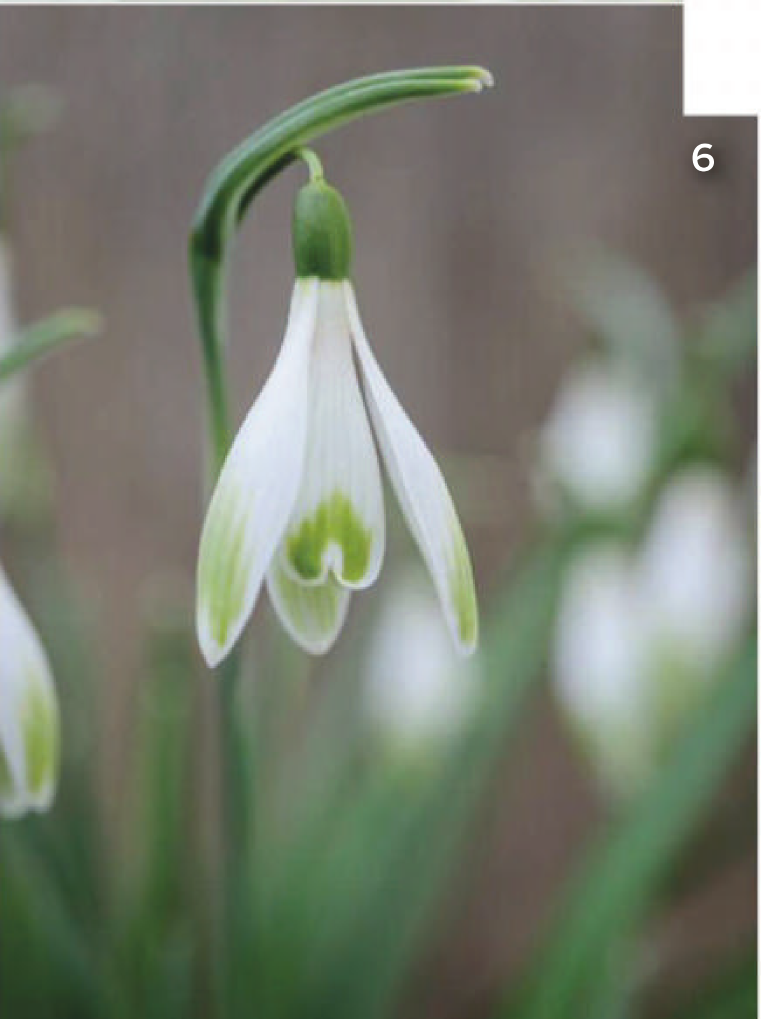
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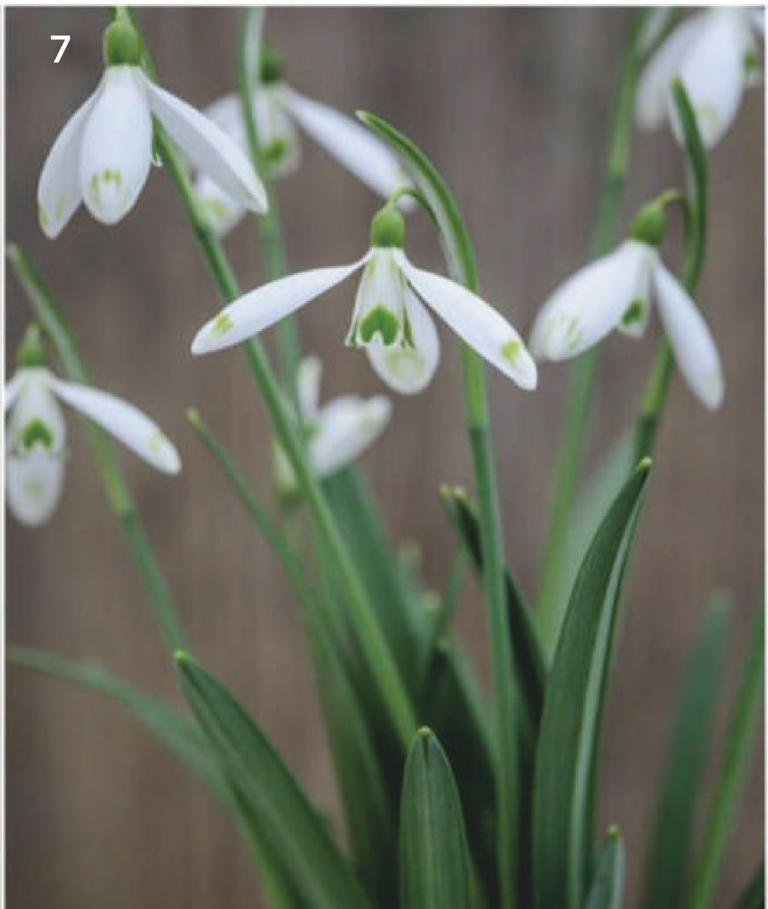
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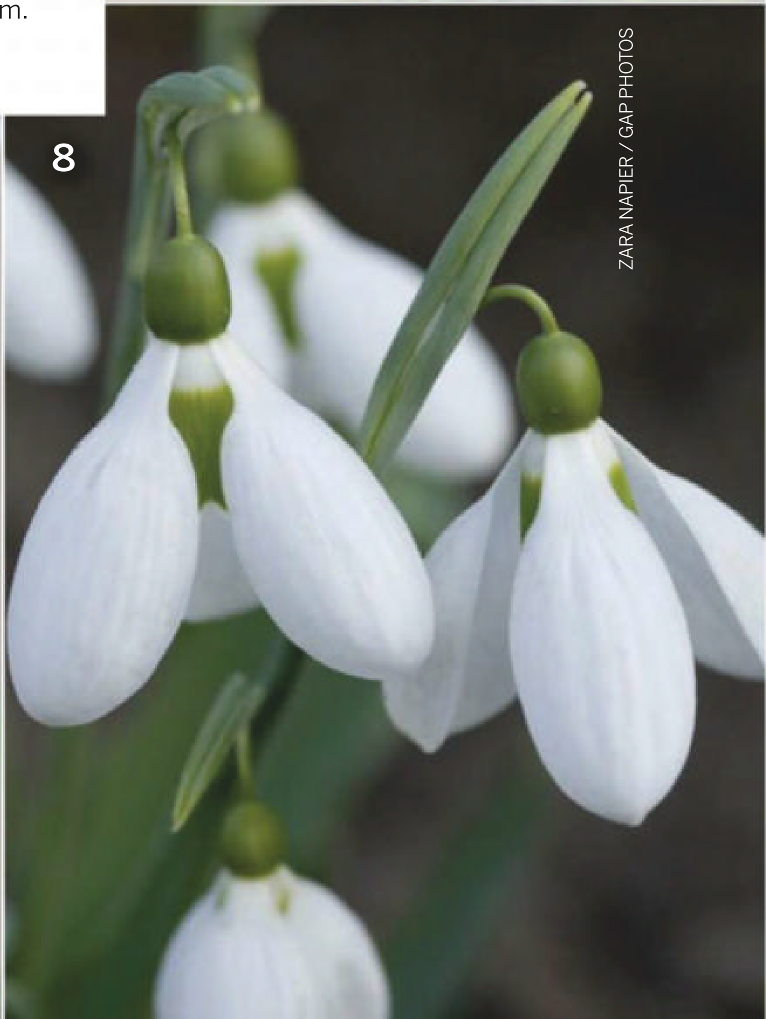
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1 ***Galanthus*** **'Günter Waldorf'**
This snowdrop commemorates a pioneering German galanthophile. It is a handsome hybrid, with large, long flowers. 25cm . RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

2 ***Galanthus*** **'Corrie McKeague'**
This cultivar is poignantly named after an RAF airman who went missing in 2017. 20cm . RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

3 ***Galanthus*** **'Alison Hilary'**
Discovered by Joe Sharman at Sutton Court. Named for the owner's wife, it commemorates her maiden name. 20-25cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

4 ***Galanthus elwesii*** **'John Tomlinson'**
Dedicated to a keen plantsman and gardener, this attractively marked snowdrop flowers later than the average. 20-30cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

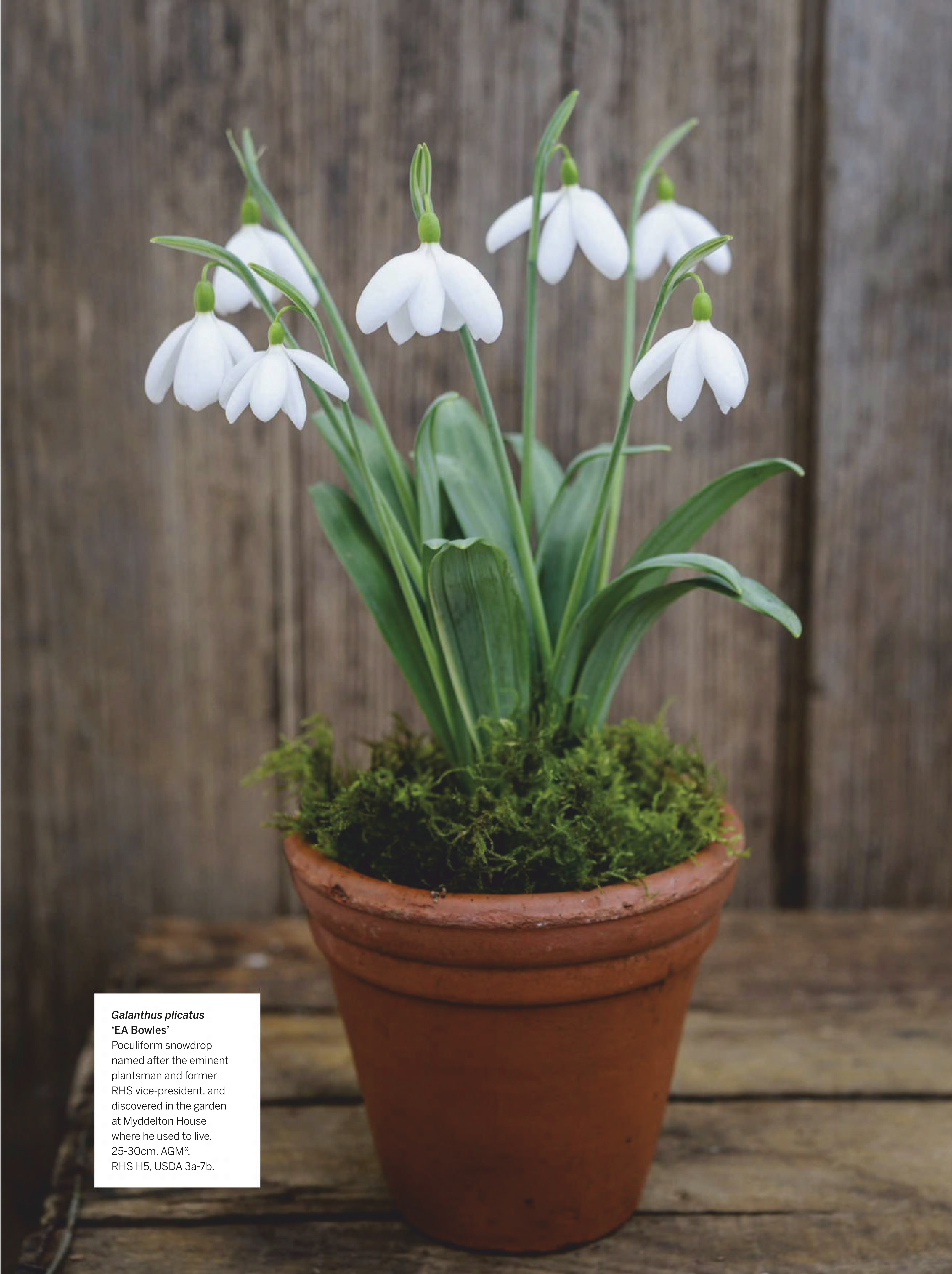
5 ***Galanthus reginae-olgae*** **subsp.** ***vernalis*** **'John Marr'**
Named for a plant collector of the 1950-'70s, this spring-flowering form of the species, has elegant, shapely flowers. 10cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

6 ***Galanthus nivalis*** **'Alan's Treat'**
A beautifully marked poculiform snowdrop. The name is a pun on the name of Alan Street, from Avon Bulbs, so it does not strictly qualify as an immortal. 20-25cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

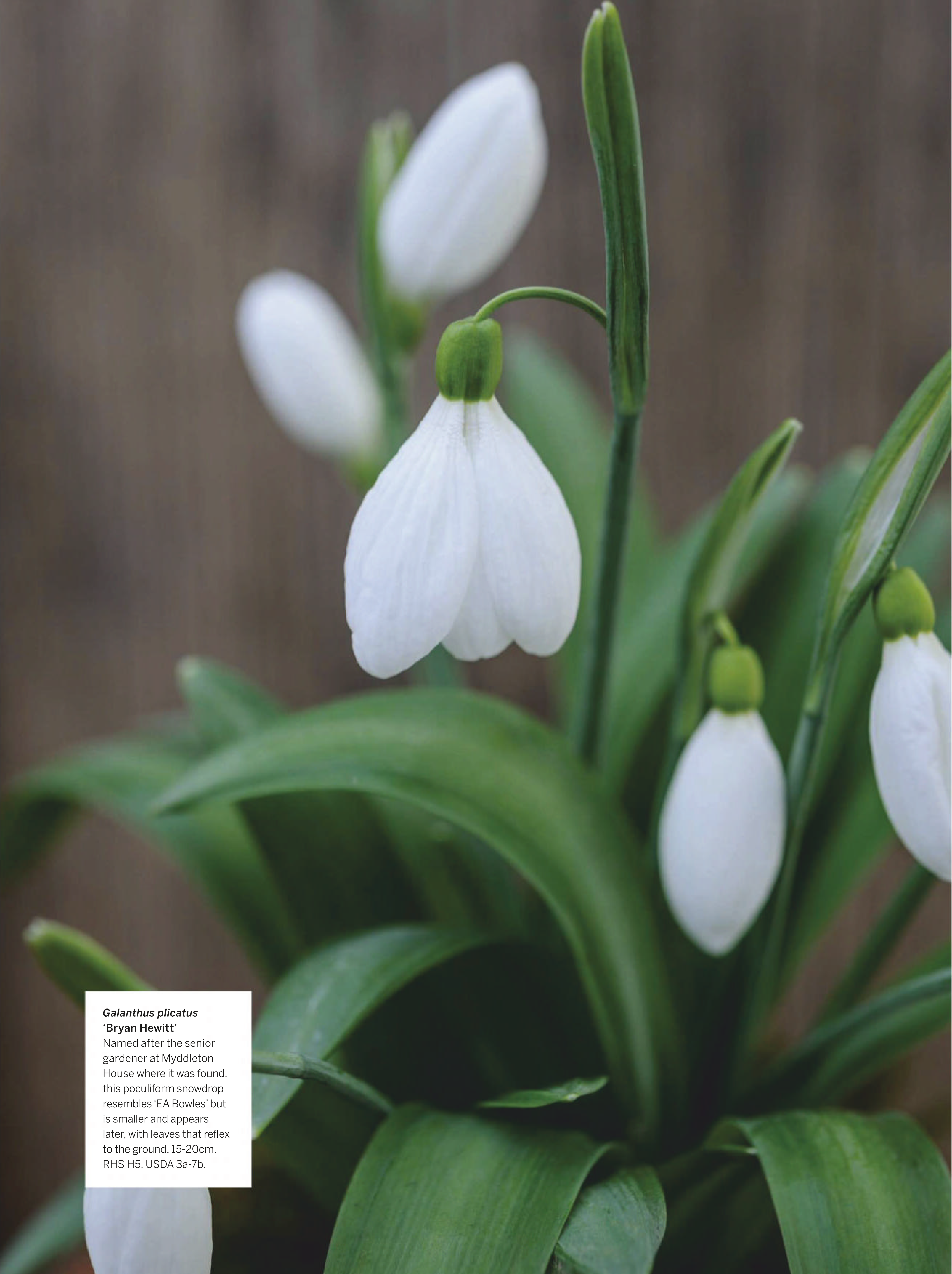
7 ***Galanthus*** **'Tom Watkins'**
Named for a former head gardener at Sutton Court, this snowdrop is significant for being the first known green-tipped hybrid, although better cultivars have since emerged. 15-20cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

8 ***Galanthus*** **'Melanie Broughton'**
Named for the daughter of Lord Fairhaven of Anglesey Abbey, its plump, puckered flower has a striking green inner petal borne on a tall stem. 25cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

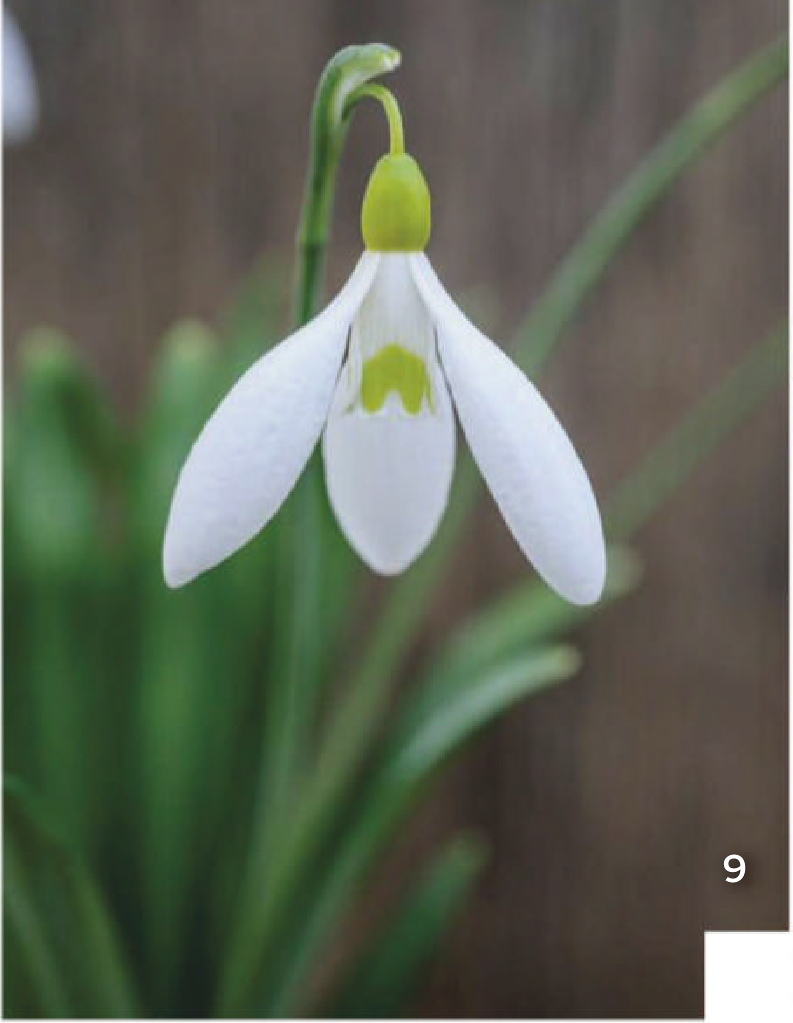
ZARA NAPIER / GAP PHOTOS



Galanthus plicatus
'EA Bowles'
Poculiform snowdrop named after the eminent plantsman and former RHS vice-president, and discovered in the garden at Myddelton House where he used to live. 25-30cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.



***Galanthus plicatus* 'Bryan Hewitt'**
Named after the senior gardener at Myddleton House where it was found, this poculiform snowdrop resembles 'EA Bowles' but is smaller and appears later, with leaves that reflex to the ground. 15-20cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.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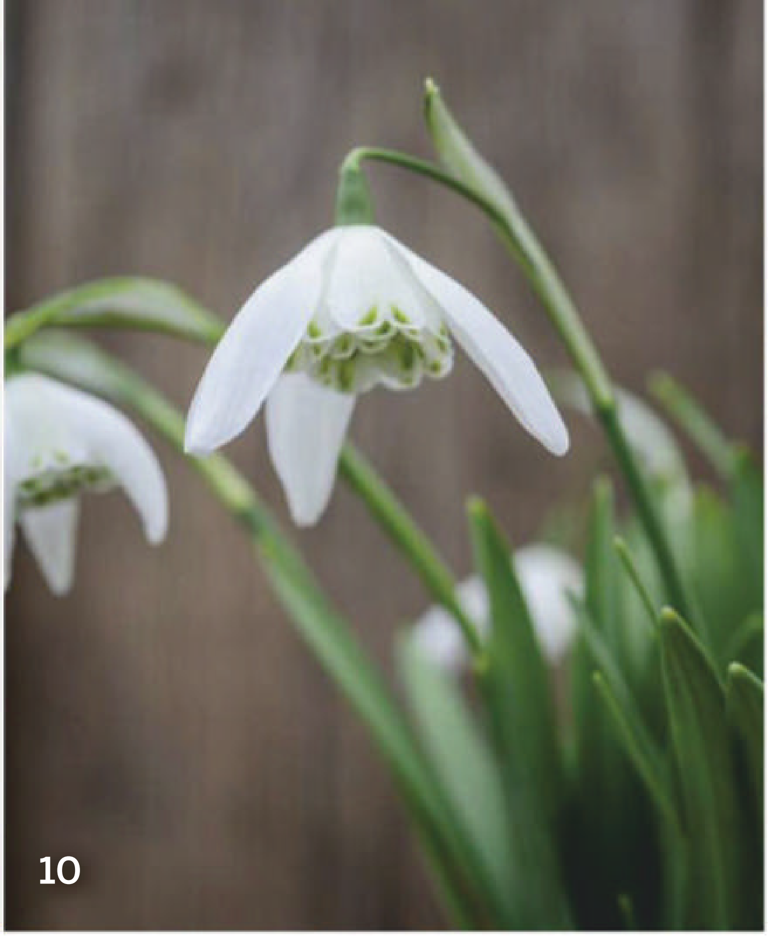
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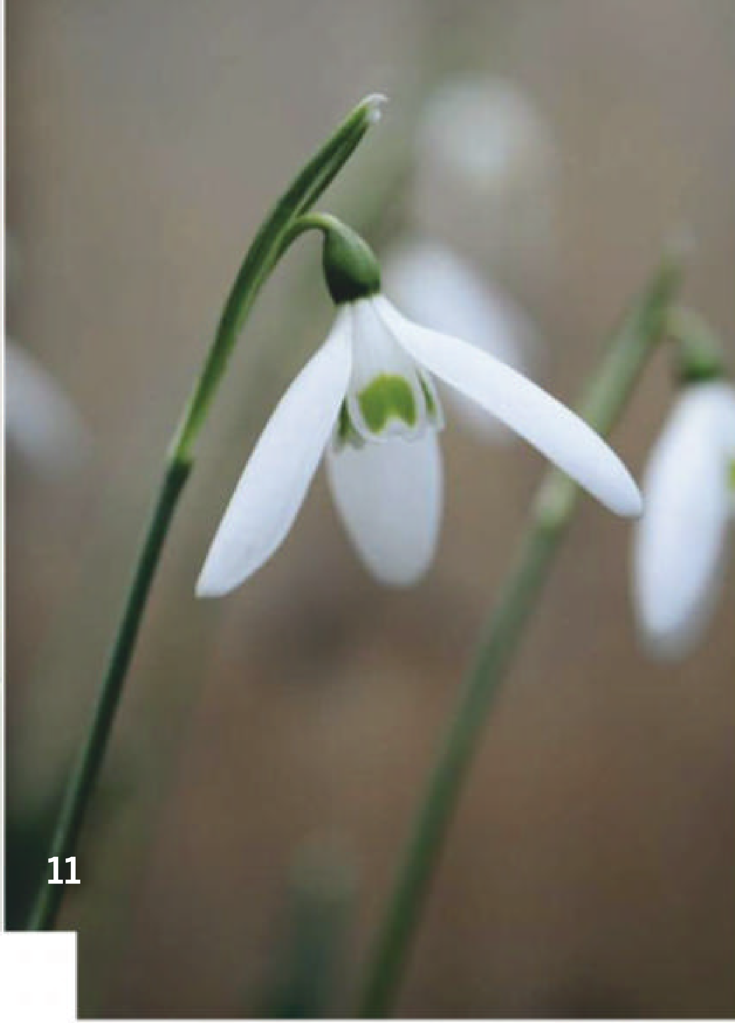
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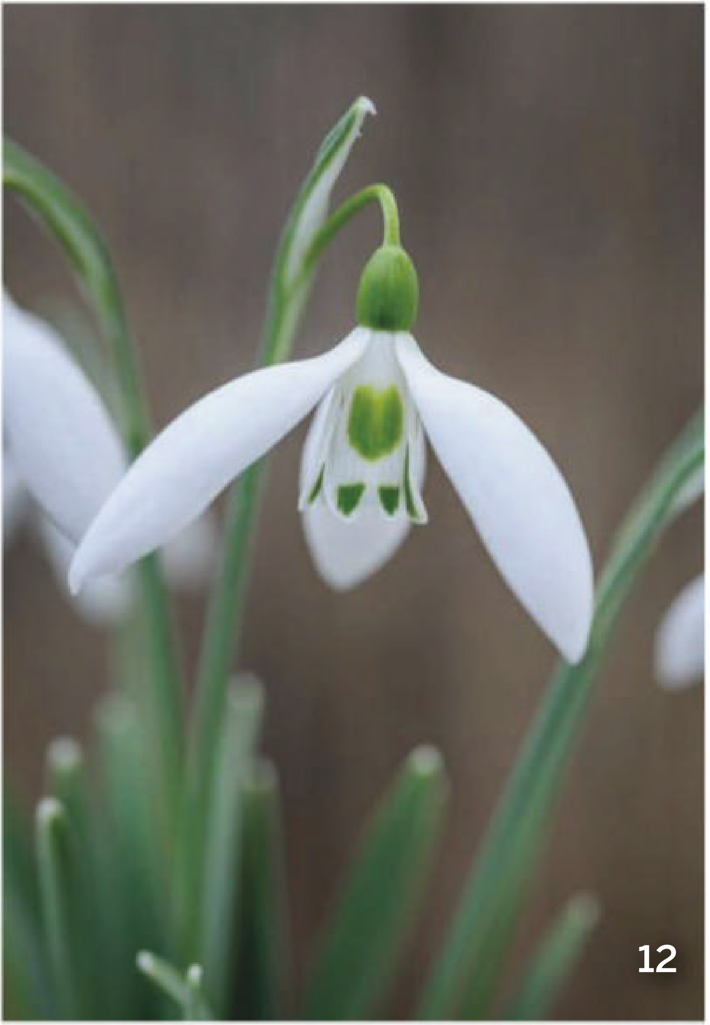
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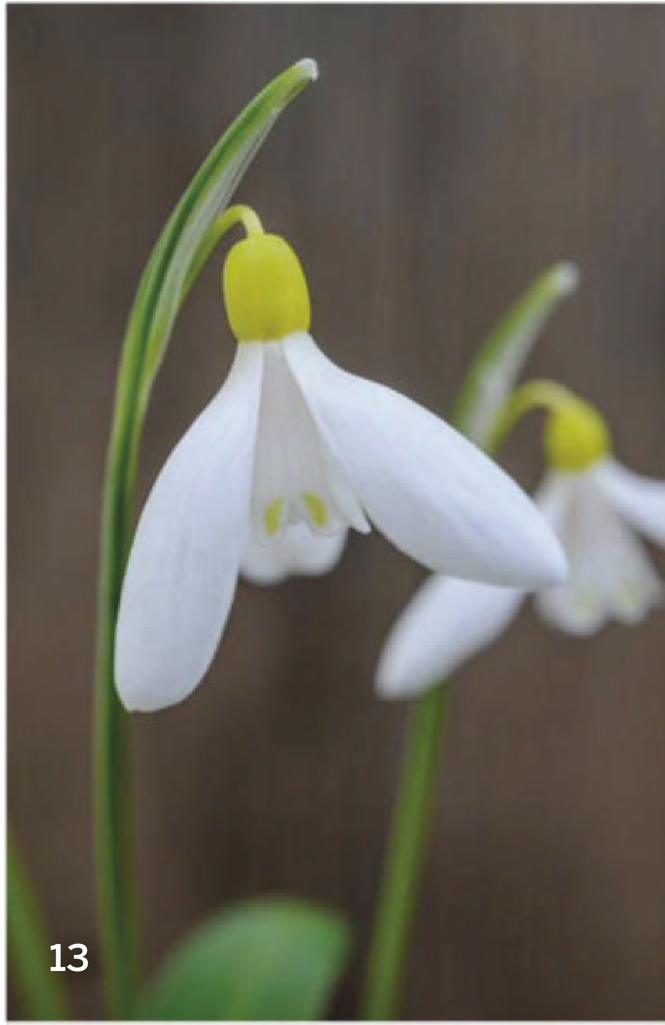
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9 *Galanthus plicatus* 'Sarah Dumont'
Named for one of Monksilver's long-term helpers, its rounded flowers have a delicate acid-yellow-green ovary and markings. 20cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

10 *Galanthus* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley'
Lady Stanley was a member of the RHS narcissus and tulip committee. This flower arose in her garden at Sibbertoft Manor but was not named until well after she died. 12cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

11 *Galanthus reginae-olgae* 'Naomi Slade'
A tall, elegant snowdrop that flowers in late September. Unusually, mature bulbs can produce a second flower. 15-20cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

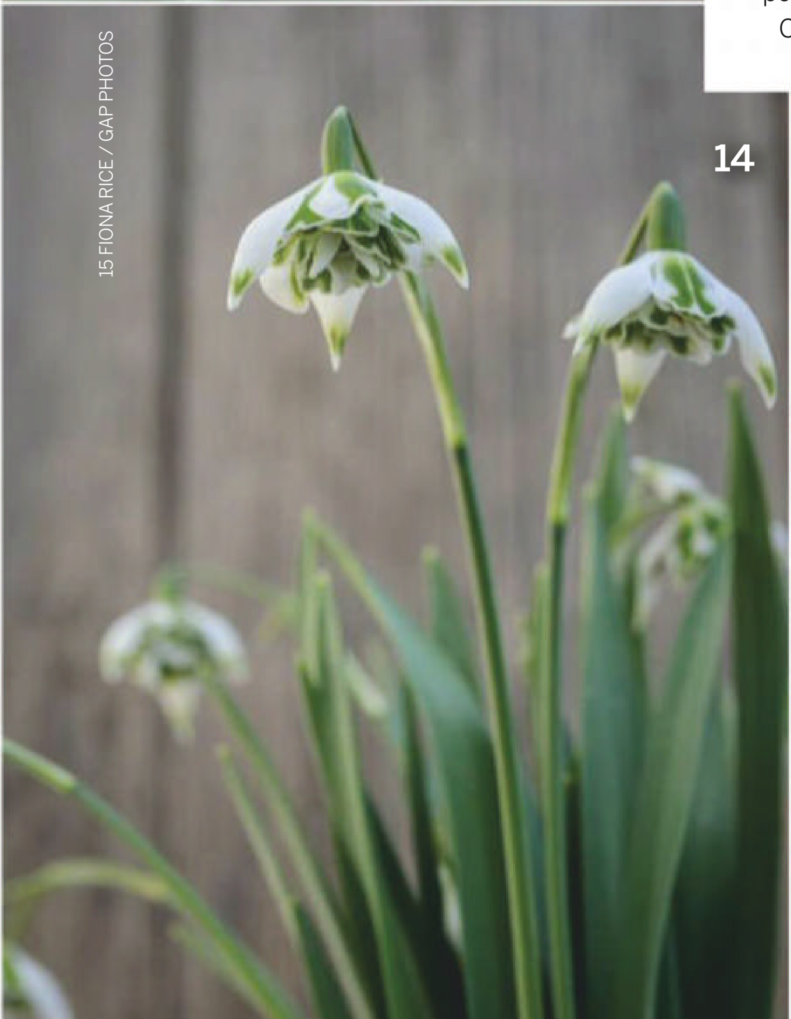
12 *Galanthus* 'Elizabeth Benfield'
A new hybrid of *G. gracilis*, with grey leaves and distinctive inner markings. It acknowledges a pivotal member of the team at Joe Sharman's Monksilver Nursery. 20cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

13 *Galanthus woronowii* 'Elizabeth Harrison'
A highly desirable new cultivar discovered in the garden of an elderly couple in Scotland. 15cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

14 *Galanthus* 'Betty Hansell'
This snowdrop has a neat double flower with strong green markings on the inner petals. 10-15cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

15 *Galanthus elwesii* 'Mrs Macnamara'
Although not strictly an immortal, this early snowdrop is named for the mother-in-law of poet Dylan Thomas. 25cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

16 *Galanthus nivalis* 'Anna Mill'
A poculiform snowdrop distinguished by almost completely straight petals, giving it a triangular appearance. Another snowdrop from Sutton Court, named for a friend of the owners. 20cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.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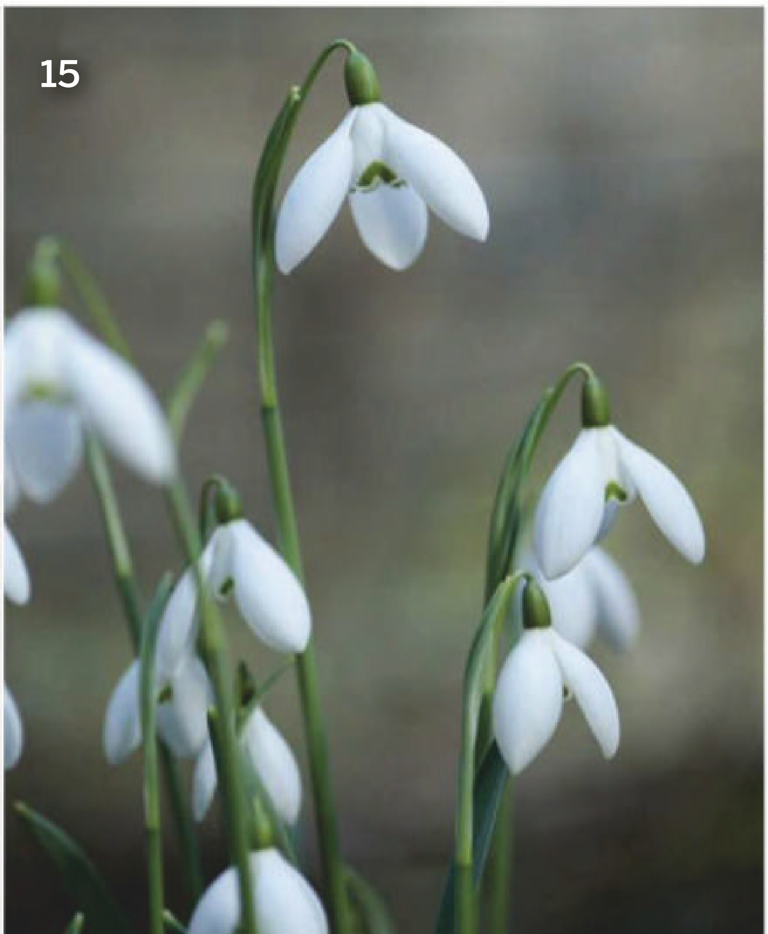
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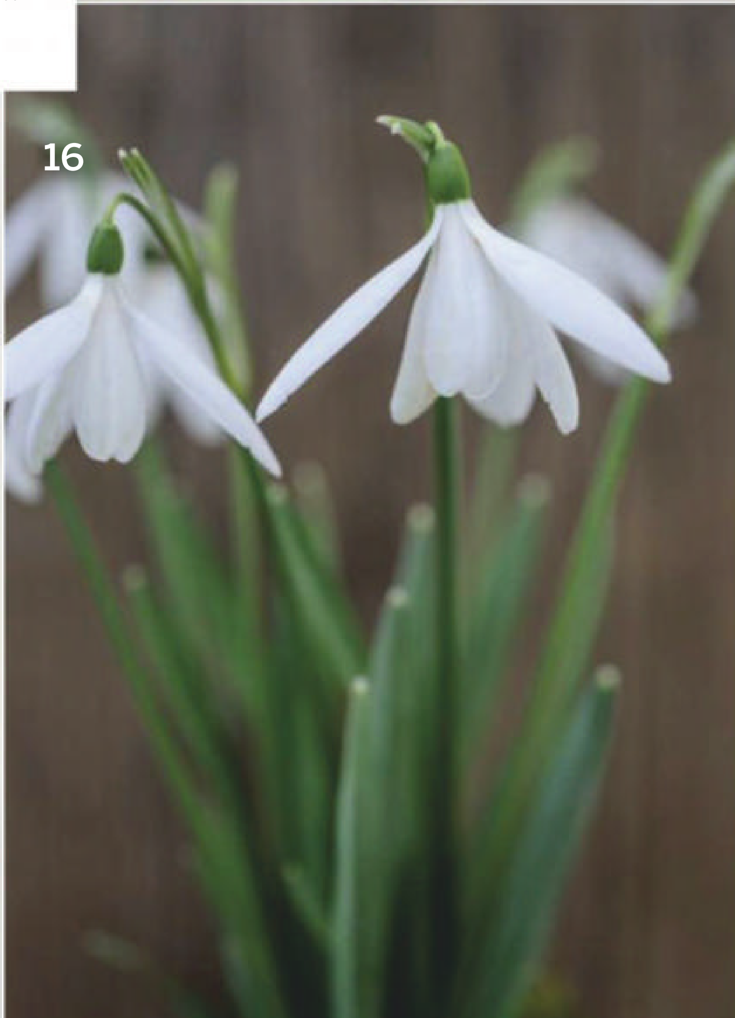
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15 FIONA RICE / GAP PHOTOS

HORTICULTURAL WHO'S WHO

ADAM WHITE

The new president of the Landscape Institute and champion of apprenticeships on the art of performance, the importance of innovation and why it's good to talk

WORDS **TIM RICHARDSON** PORTRAIT **CHARLIE HOPKINSON**

It's a quiet street of terraced houses in Kingston-upon-Thames, west London, but you can see the home of the new president of the Landscape Institute (LI) from some distance away: it's the one with the three-metre potted sunflowers in the front garden. Later, over coffee in his immaculate back garden, in the shade of a huge eucalyptus tree, Adam White tells me that the display is part of a local street-planting project. Adam wanted to take part because he is an enthusiast, someone who always likes to join in.

Nevertheless his appointment in July 2018 as president of the UK's professional body for landscape architects came as a surprise to many as – unprecedented among previous incumbents – he had never served time on any of the LI's committees (though he ruefully notes he has had to learn the skills of a 'committee person' pretty snappily). The LI had recently changed its leadership voting system so that it was easier for an 'outsider' to gain a toehold. Adam was persuaded to stand and was then able to storm the barricades by means of votes and personal endorsements.

> AT 12, I MADE A BEFORE-AND-AFTER PAPIER MÂCHÉ MODEL OF THE VILLAGE POND WITH A DECK AROUND IT. THE COUNCIL GAVE US £2,000

He has already shaken things up to a degree. An enthusiastic Tweeter, he has installed a dedicated social media manager at the LI, and there are plans for a more 'outward-facing' approach from a body not best known for its communication skills. He has also introduced a new category in the LI Awards, devoted to planting design. "There was some resistance to the planting-design category at a high level and I had to wheel out a few big guns like Tom Stuart-Smith," he says. "Horticulture is what makes the landscape industry so special, it is one of the few tools that makes us stand out." Such an idea is still anathema to some in the profession.

More feathers were ruffled when it got out that Adam was having discussions with the Society of Garden Designers about working together. He explains that while there are no plans for a merger of the two bodies, there is no harm in talking.

And talking is what Adam is good at. A slim, sporty and highly personable 45-year-old with a strong Cheshire accent, he seems almost boyish in his crisp blue T-shirt (until he suffered a slipped disc a few years ago he was a competition rower). Before meeting him, I was curious about how he had landed the presidency, which is usually reserved for elder statesmen. But it turns out he is one of life's great communicators – he seems made for television, and there has been interest. Indeed it was these skills that exposed him to the LI membership in the first place: he co-presented their awards for four years ("A lot of people thought I was a professional MC.").

Adam hints that his extrovert character may have originated in childhood insecurity. "I struggled at school – I got bullied because I could barely read or write. Then the penny dropped. I went away and taught myself, and I became somebody else – it was like a performance." He demonstrates by reading a random piece of text, emphasising each word like Laurence Olivier at the Royal Shakespeare Company. Thus, it seems, a performer was born.

Adam worked part-time throughout his formative years in his father's sports shop in Warrington – and you get the impression he could sell just about anything. His landscape career began at the age of 12 when, encouraged by his father, he wrote to the local authority about cleaning up a pond in his home village, filling it with fish and making a boardwalk with 'pegs' for anglers. "I made a before-and-after papier mâché model of the pond with a deck around it," he says. "The council gave us £2,000 to build it. It's still there, as a kind of memorial to my dad."

Adam approached the landscape profession in a typically circuitous manner, via a course in countryside management at agricultural college aged 16. He had to go back and take A levels to get into university, but now thinks this was unnecessary. "If there'd been an apprenticeship available, I would have taken it," he says. "That's partly why I have been very keen on introducing apprenticeships into our profession – 20 practices have already signed up."

Adam met his business partner Andrée Davies while they were both working for the environmental charity Groundwork. In 2009 they set up as Davies White, specialising in natural playspaces. Their biggest project so far has been the Commonwealth Games legacy park in Glasgow and they are currently revamping the playspace at RHS Wisley. A recent coup is being picked to create the 2019 RHS Chelsea Flower Show's 'Back to Nature' garden with HRH The Duchess of Cambridge. It's hard to believe that for the first two years they had no office, using a riverside pub as a base instead.

How extraordinary to think that the current president of the august LI is a mid-career professional who was hot-desking in a pub just a few years ago. Clearly there are many in the organisation who felt it was in need of a new way of communicating with the world. If that is the case, Adam White is most definitely the man for the job. □

USEFUL INFORMATION
Read more about Adam's practice at **davieswhite.co.uk**, and the Landscape Institute at **landscapeinstitute.org**

NEXT MONTH Charles Williams of Caerhays Estate.

RETICULATE IRIS

Blue purple or yellow with an orange blaze on the falls, miniature iris can be grown in a pot, short grass or borders

WORDS **ALYS FOWLER** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**

Miniature irises, such as this *Iris* 'Harmony', are hardy and relatively easy to grow.

GAP PHOTOS

When you begin to doubt that spring will arrive, that it is just something you dreamt of, when the mud gets ever more cloying and morning, noon and dusk are all of a similar hue, nature sends you more than just a present – she sends a bolt driven up through the earth, a reminder that she is moving the clocks forward. How else is it possible that early flowering irises exist? When everything outside is gloomy, here arrives something so delicate looking, so painterly, so otherworldly. It's a very good trick.

Early flowering, bulbous irises largely comprise cultivars derived from the Reticulata group: *Iris reticulata*, *Iris histrioides* and *Iris danfordiae*. These species are found high up in the rocky mountain areas of Turkey, the Caucasus mountains and parts of the Middle East.

The golden, netted iris, *Iris reticulata*, gets its name from the papery tunic, with its distinct mesh network, that surrounds the fleshly bulb. The flowers are yellow, blue or purple with an orange blaze on the lower petals or falls. *Iris histrioides* is a copycat of *Iris histrio*, its pale-blue flowers remarkably similar to those of the Syrian iris. The bulb of *Iris danfordiae* also has a netted coat, but a whitish one. It was discovered by the intrepid collector Mrs CG Danford, who travelled on several occasions to Asia Minor in the 1870s and found it in Turkey. It is one of the first of the Reticulata group to bloom, appearing through the snow in January. Its flowers, which come in shades of yellow from bright buttercup to deep orange, are highly fragrant and smell of honey. Its only drawback is that it is short-lived and needs frequent dividing to get good repeat flowering.

Of several well-known cultivars, the pale blue-grey and yellow 'Katharine Hodgkin' needs no introduction. A hybrid between *Iris histrioides* and *Iris winogradowii*, it has become somewhat ubiquitous, and while it still has its charms, it is starting to look a little faded beside some of the newer contenders. Other popular cultivars include the purple 'George', the royal-blue 'Harmony', with its yellow and white falls, and the blue and white *Iris histrioides* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley', a sport of 'George.' These all have lovely blooms and make great garden plants as well as container subjects. And let us not forget the reliable flowerers 'Frank Elder' and 'Sheila Ann Germaney', which have similar parentage to 'Katharine Hodgkin' and are well worth growing in the garden.

John Amand, managing director of Jacques Amand International, famed for its stunning displays of early-flowering irises at the RHS early spring shows in London, recommends recent arrival 'Katherine's Gold', a sport of 'Katharine Hodgkin' and an equally reliable returner, but with stronger yellows falls.

It is impossible to talk of this group without mentioning Alan McMurtrie, a retired engineer who has worked tirelessly on breeding irises. When Alan first began breeding there were just a few colours – the purples and blues, and one rather washed-out white, 'Natascha', bred in the 1970s. His meticulous breeding programme has since brought forth a range of new colours. Famed for using *Iris danfordiae* to bring yellow into the game, he legally collected from the wild a diploid form of *Iris danfordiae* that sets viable seed (the triploid clone in commerce has the typically showy flowers of such genetics, but no viable seed) and then started crossing *Iris danfordiae* with *Iris histroides* var. *sophensis*. This allowed him to create the first white-flowered hybrids with blue markings, which eventually gave rise to *Ir*is 'Starlight'.

Iris breeding is painfully slow, often taking ten years or so to get the necessary generations, followed by the slow process of bulking up stocks. "Alan's breeding programme has much more to offer in years to come," says John Amand, so if these delicate explosions of colour get your heart racing, there's never been a more exciting time to start collecting. ❑

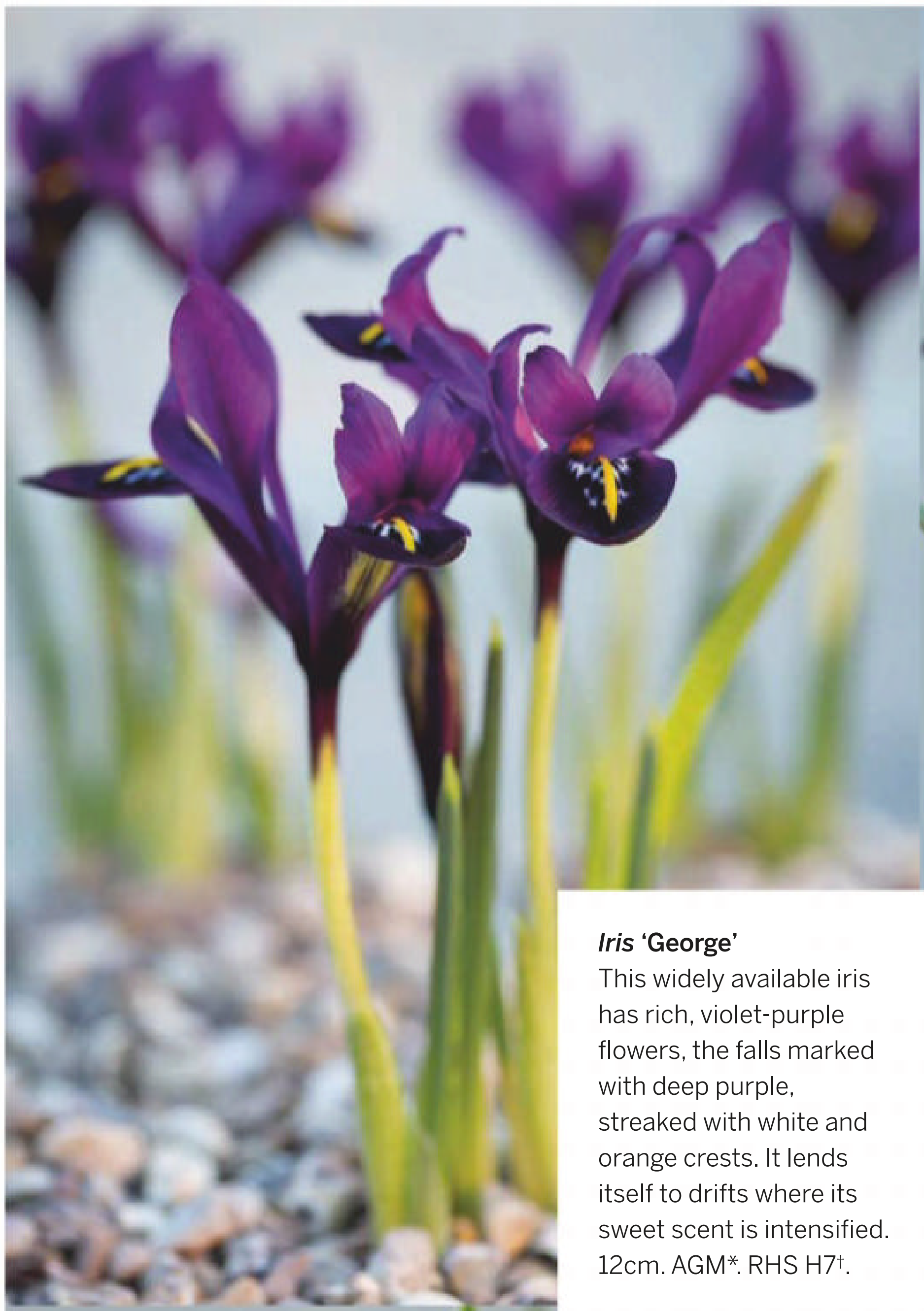
• Author Alys Fowler is a writer and horticulturist. Her recommendations for the best reticulate irises continue over the next five pages.

PLANT PROFILE

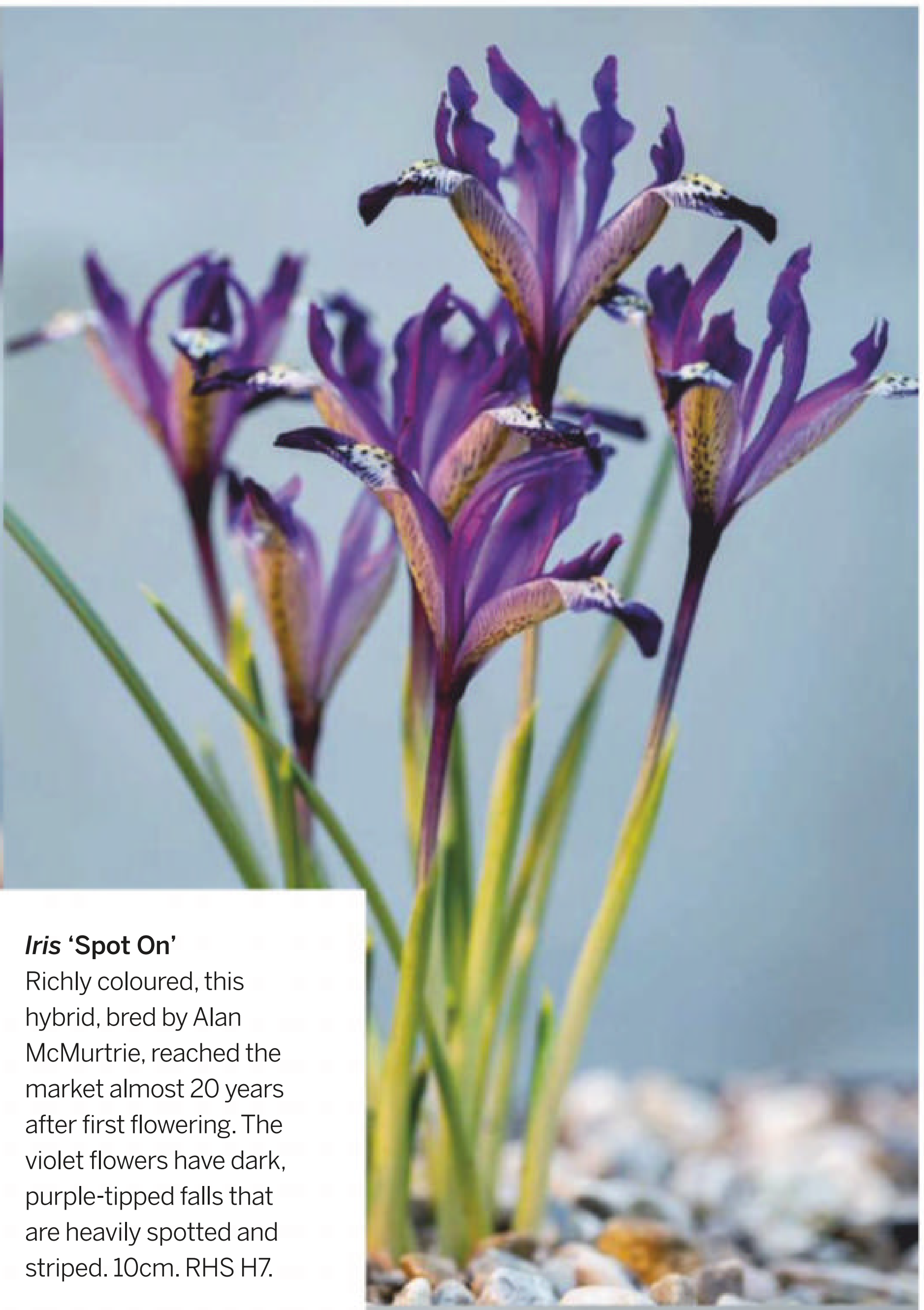
What Hybrids of *Iris reticulata*, *Iris histrioides* and *Iris danfordiae*.
Origins Native to Turkey, the Caucasus mountains and parts of the Middle East.
Season Late winter/ early spring.
Size 10-15cm.
Conditions Alpine house, raised beds, or pots in full sun.
Hardiness Fully hardy.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

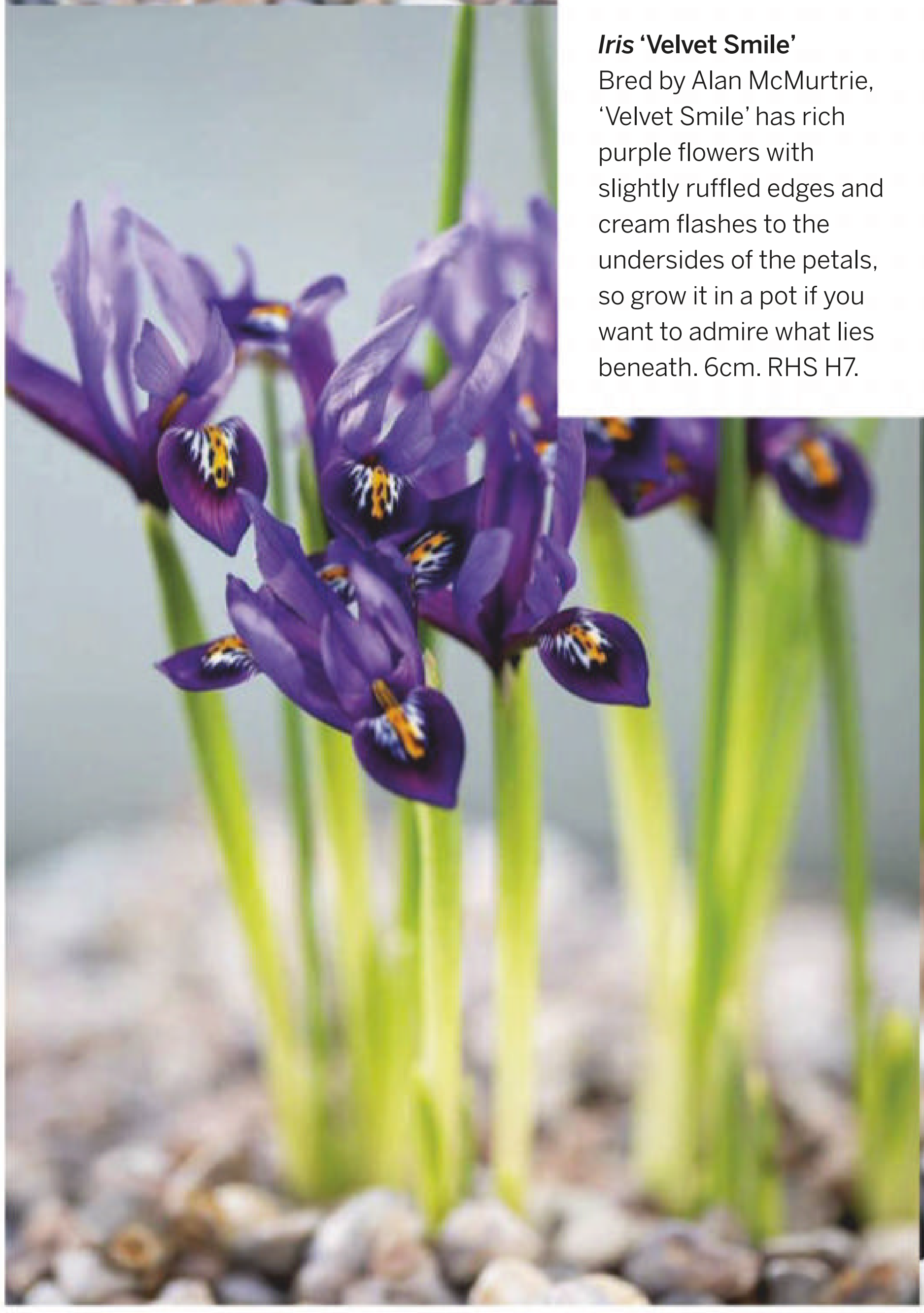
The growers
Jacques Amand International grows a wide range of bulbs, including reticulate iris. Alan McMurtrie is a breeder who has introduced numerous cultivars, many with AGM status.



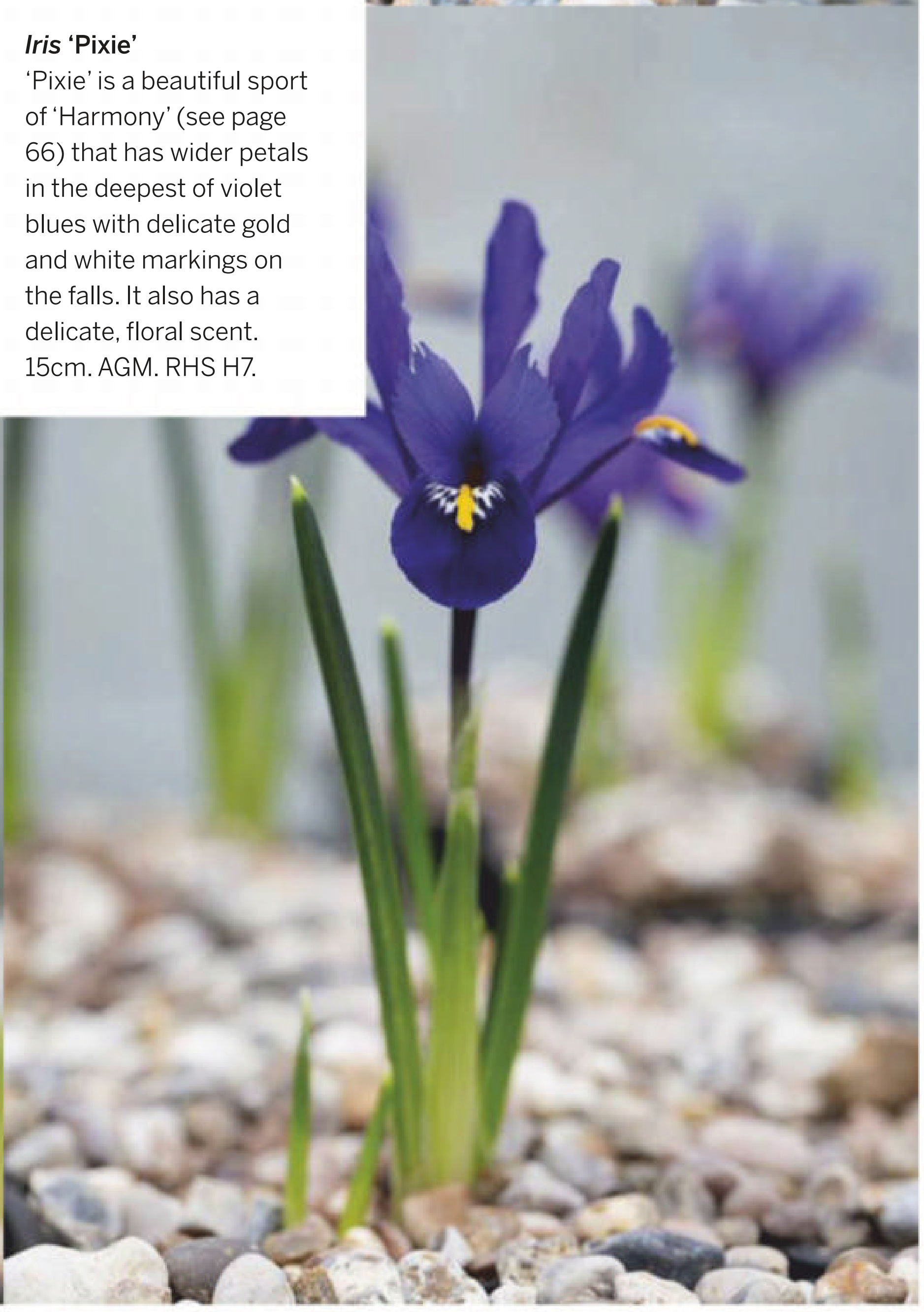
Iris 'George'
This widely available iris has rich, violet-purple flowers, the falls marked with deep purple, streaked with white and orange crests. It lends itself to drifts where its sweet scent is intensified. 12cm. AGM*. RHS H7†.



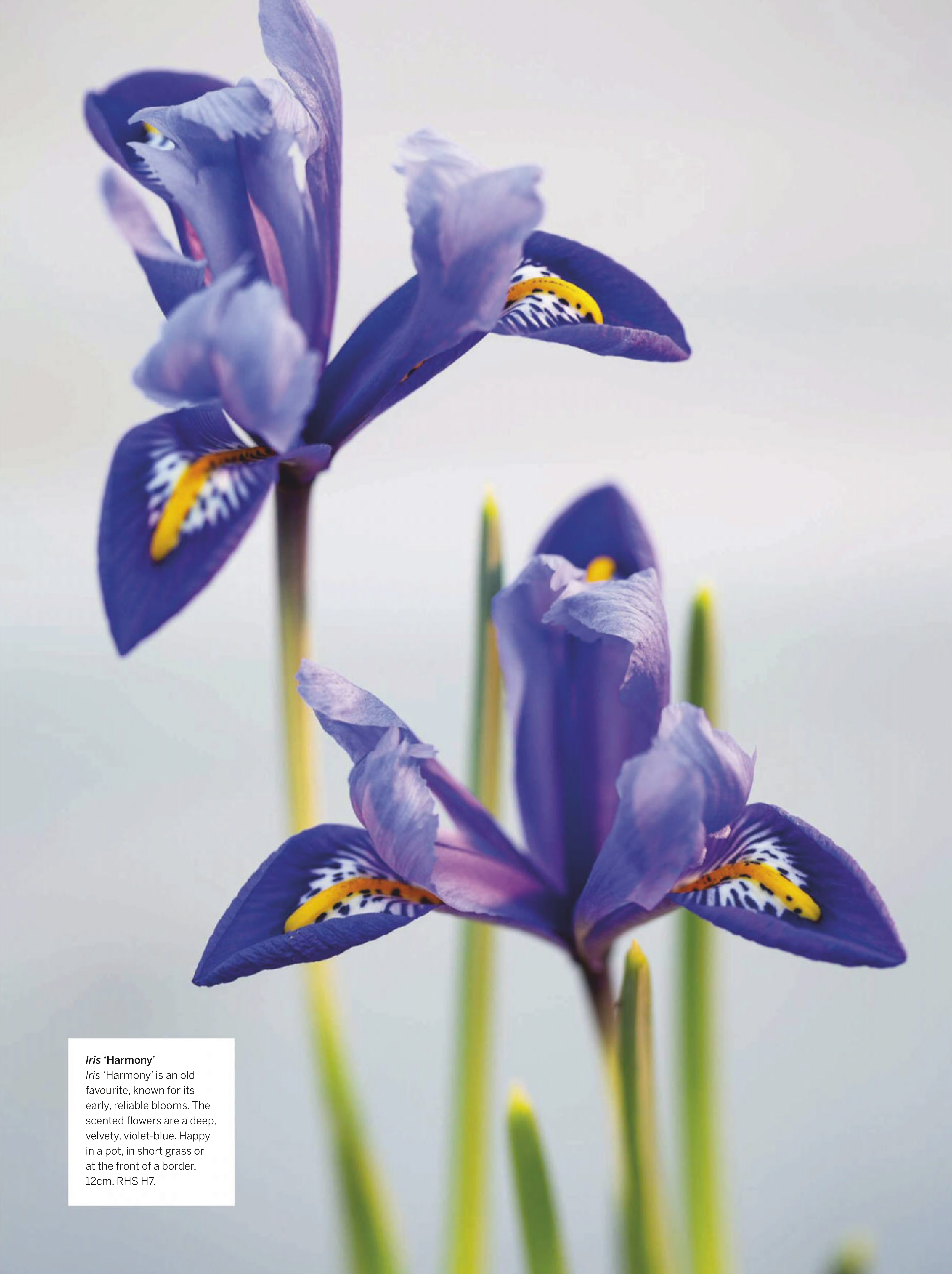
Iris 'Spot On'
Richly coloured, this hybrid, bred by Alan McMurtrie, reached the market almost 20 years after first flowering. The violet flowers have dark, purple-tipped falls that are heavily spotted and striped. 10cm. RHS H7.



Iris 'Velvet Smile'
Bred by Alan McMurtrie, 'Velvet Smile' has rich purple flowers with slightly ruffled edges and cream flashes to the undersides of the petals, so grow it in a pot if you want to admire what lies beneath. 6cm. RHS H7.

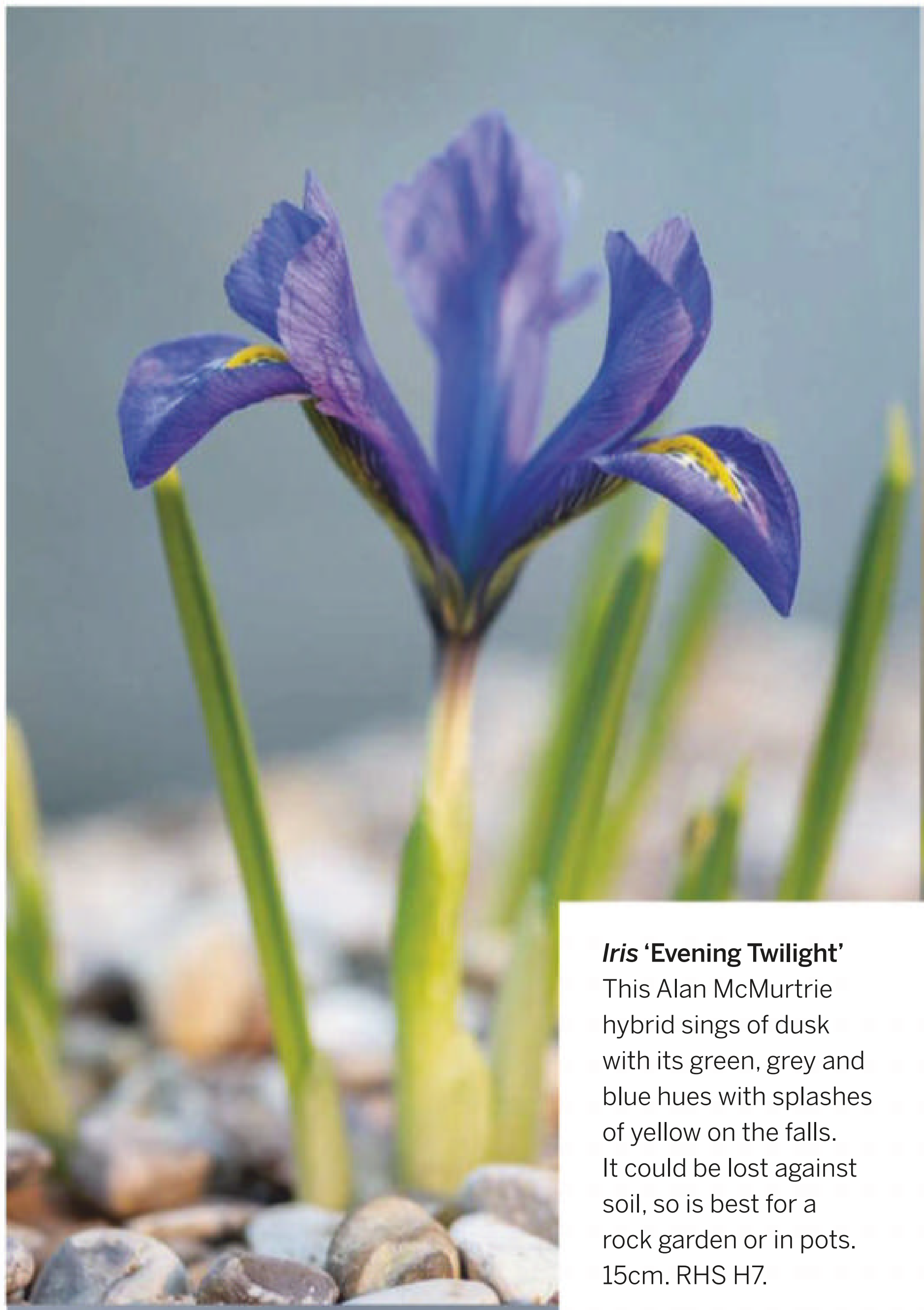


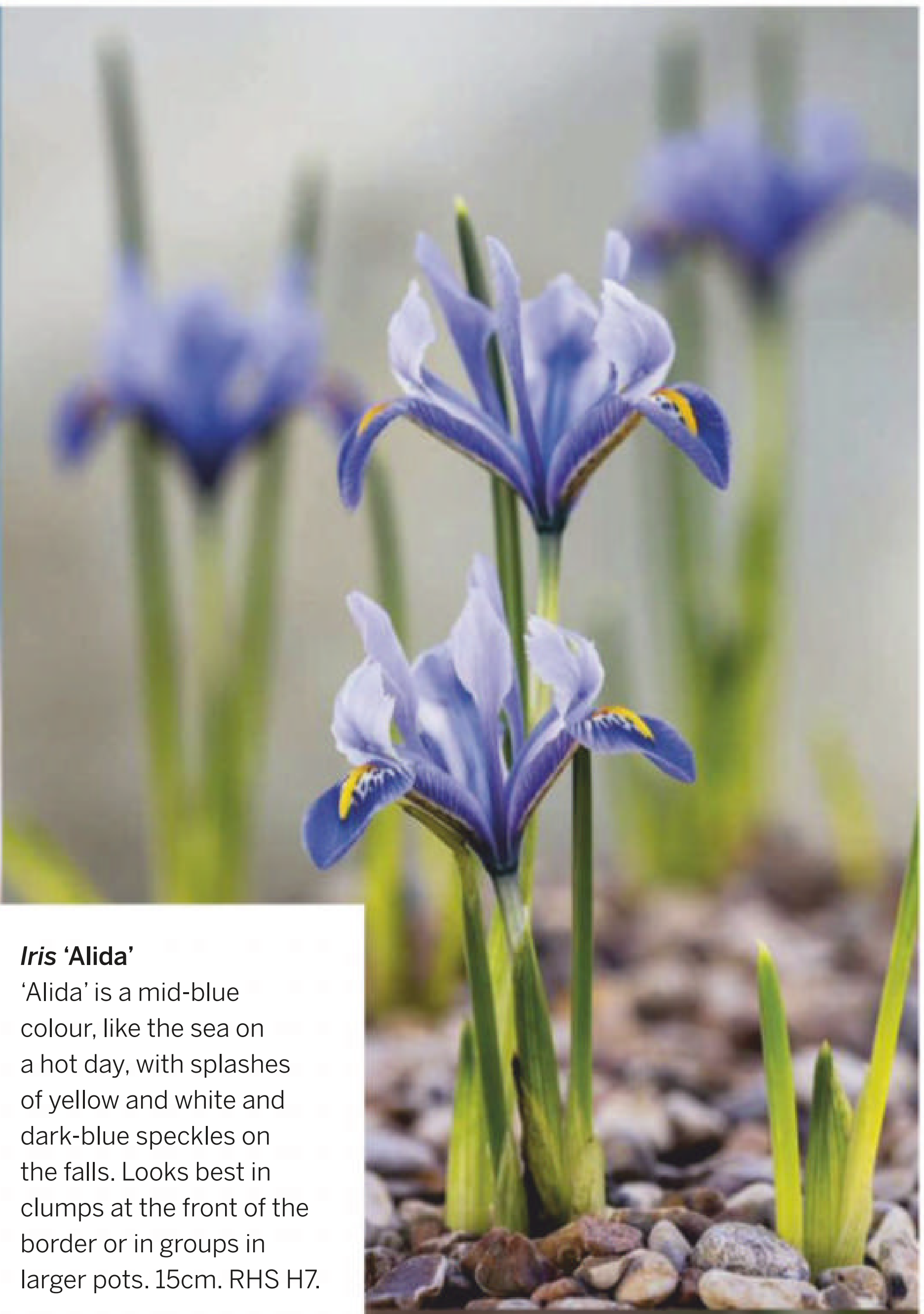
Iris 'Pixie'
'Pixie' is a beautiful sport of 'Harmony' (see page 66) that has wider petals in the deepest of violet blues with delicate gold and white markings on the falls. It also has a delicate, floral scent. 15cm. AGM. RHS H7.



***Iris* 'Harmony'**

Iris 'Harmony' is an old favourite, known for its early, reliable blooms. The scented flowers are a deep, velvety, violet-blue. Happy in a pot, in short grass or at the front of a border. 12cm. RHS H7.



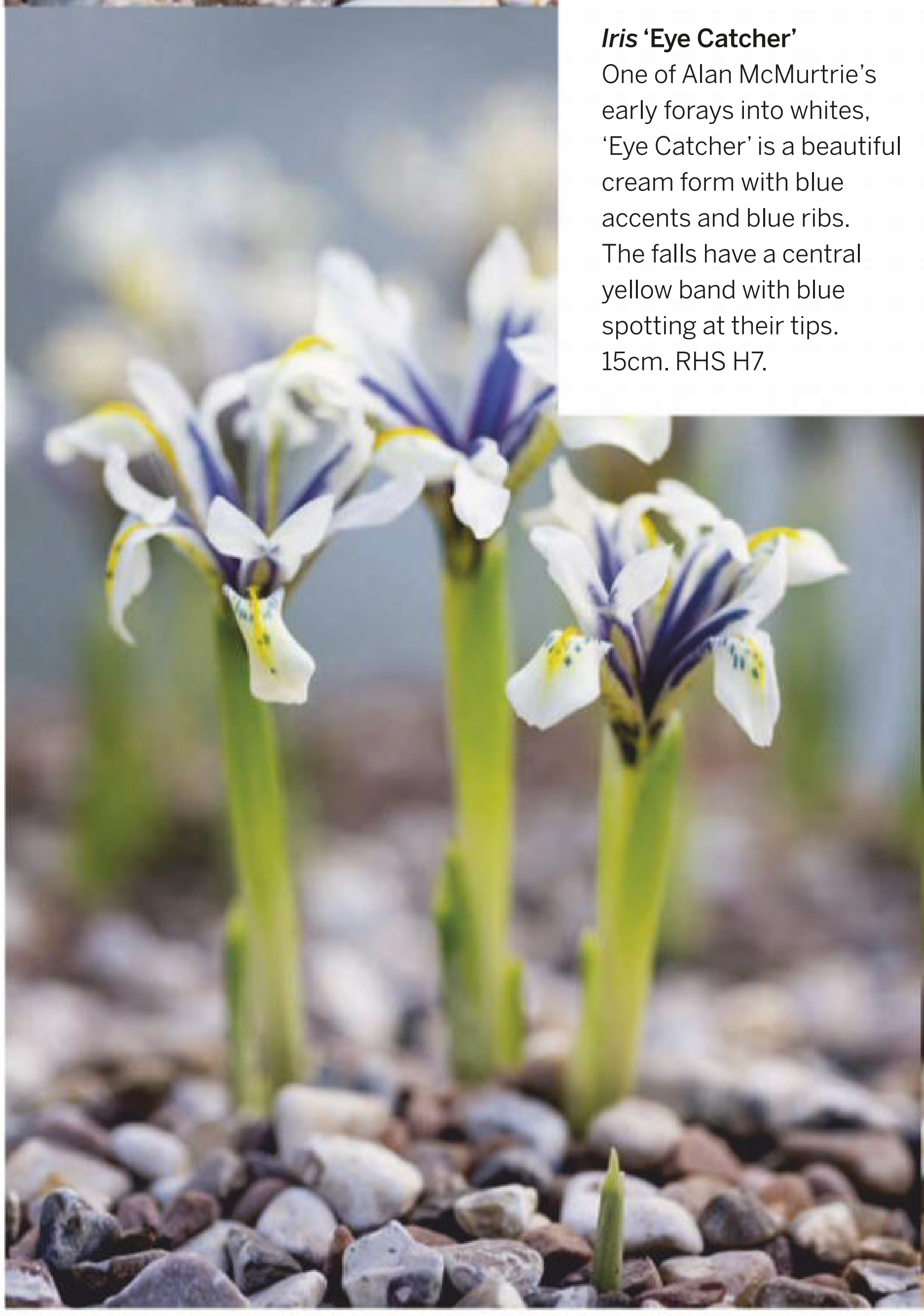


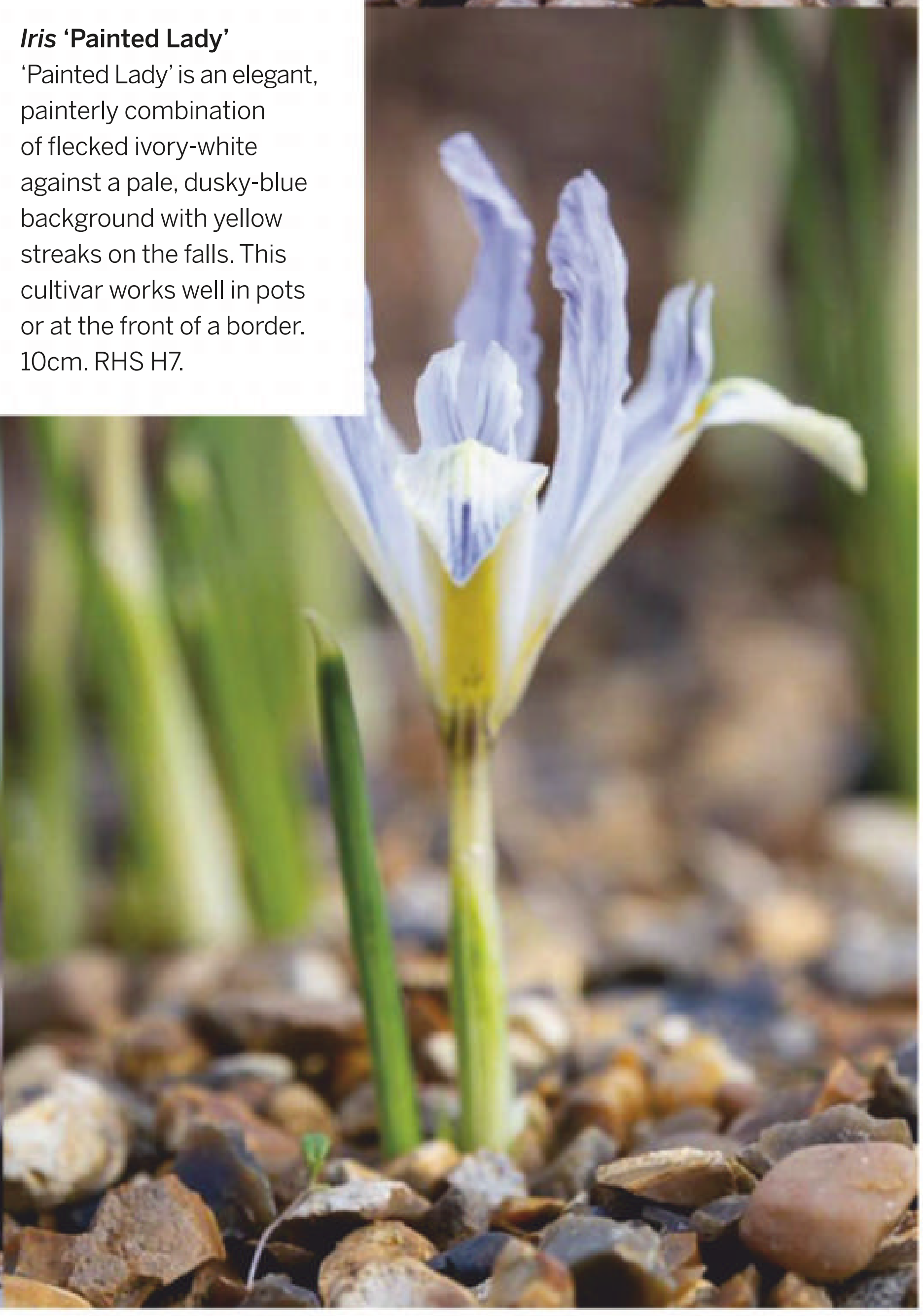
Iris 'Evening Twilight'
This Alan McMurtrie hybrid sings of dusk with its green, grey and blue hues with splashes of yellow on the falls. It could be lost against soil, so is best for a rock garden or in pots. 15cm. RHS H7.

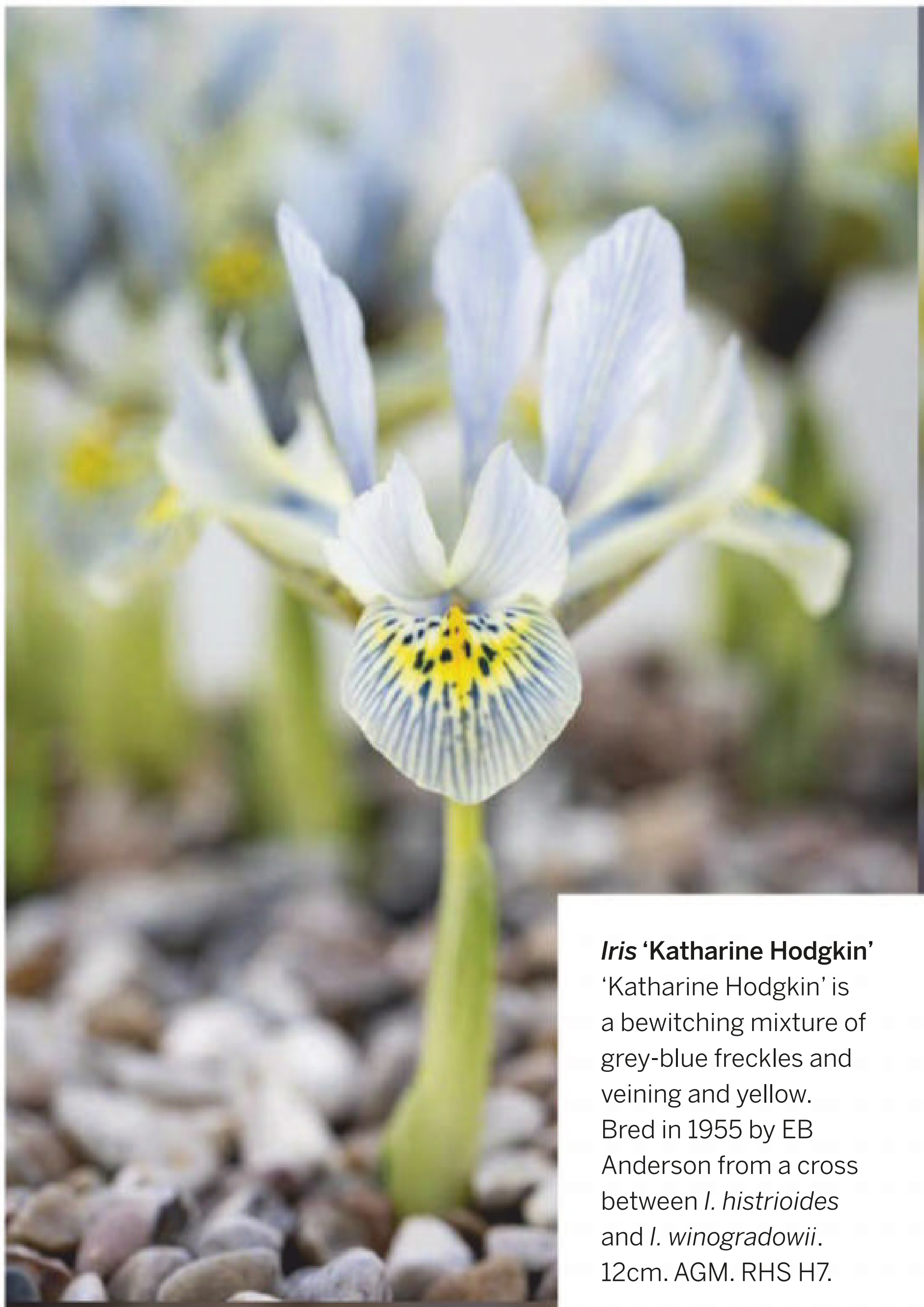
Iris 'Eye Catcher'
One of Alan McMurtrie's early forays into whites, 'Eye Catcher' is a beautiful cream form with blue accents and blue ribs. The falls have a central yellow band with blue spotting at their tips. 15cm. RHS H7.

***Iris* 'Alida'**
'Alida' is a mid-blue colour, like the sea on a hot day, with splashes of yellow and white and dark-blue speckles on the falls. Looks best in clumps at the front of the border or in groups in larger pots. 15cm. RHS H7.

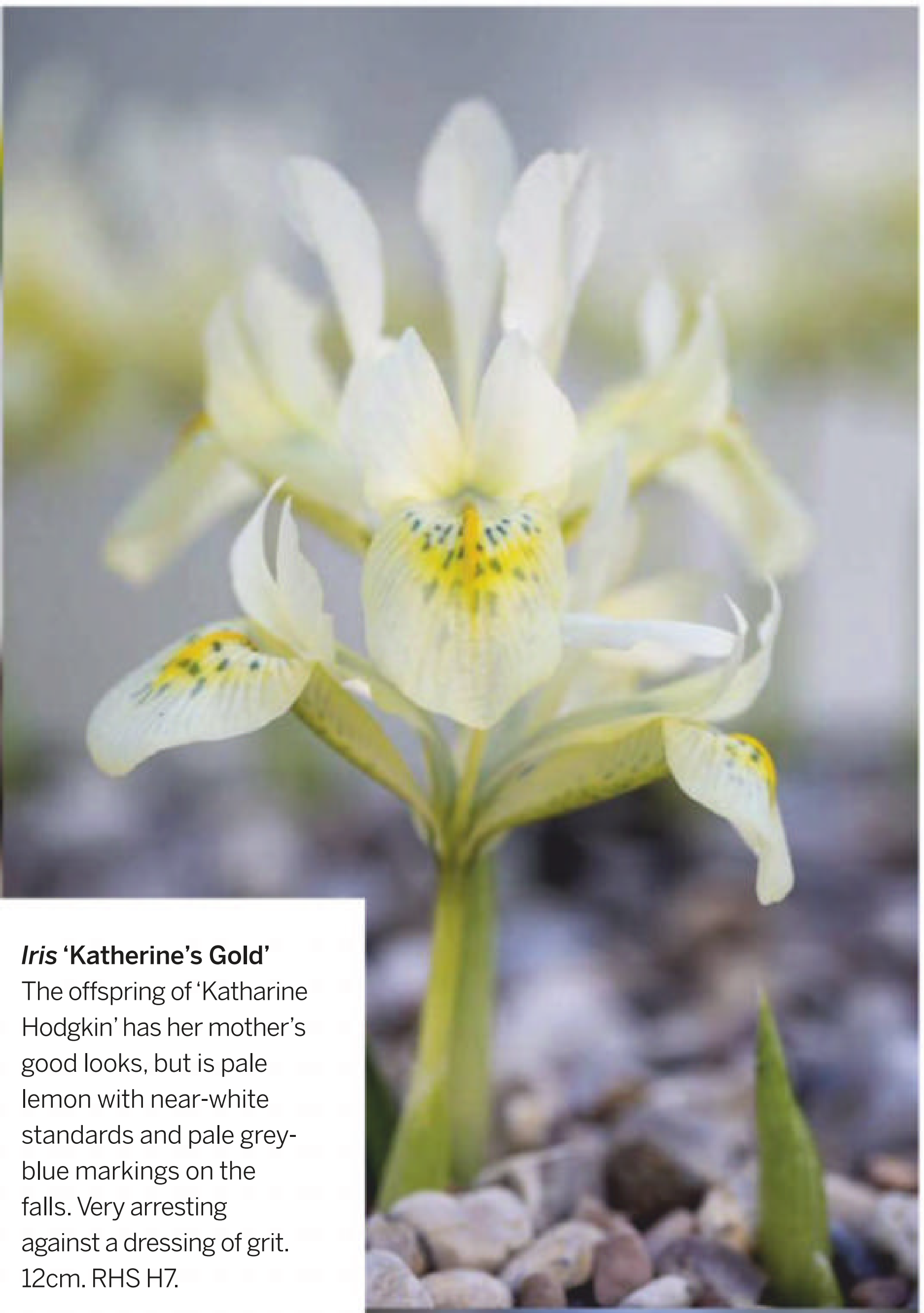
***Iris* 'Painted Lady'**
'Painted Lady' is an elegant, painterly combination of flecked ivory-white against a pale, dusky-blue background with yellow streaks on the falls. This cultivar works well in pots or at the front of a border. 10cm. RHS H7.



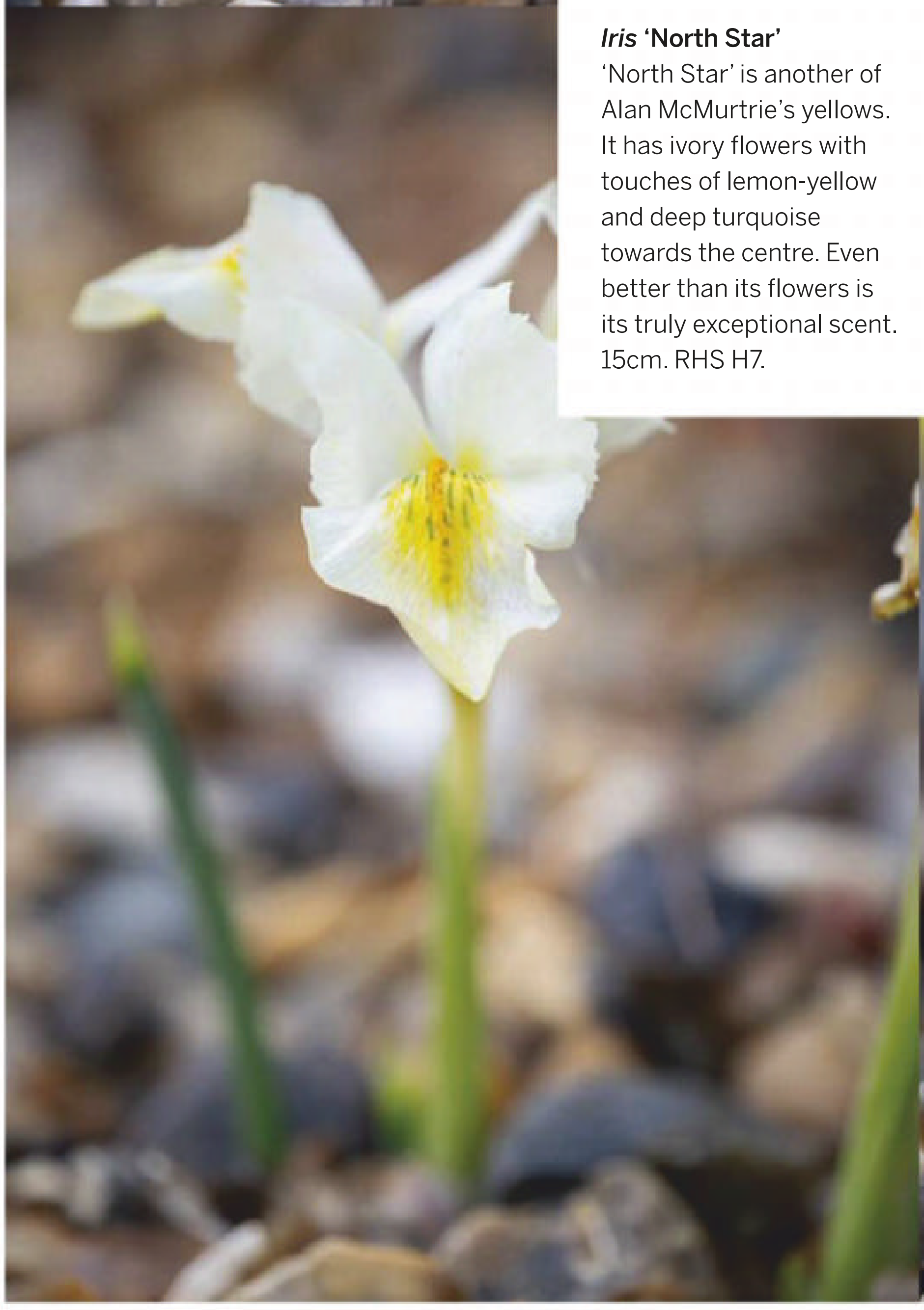




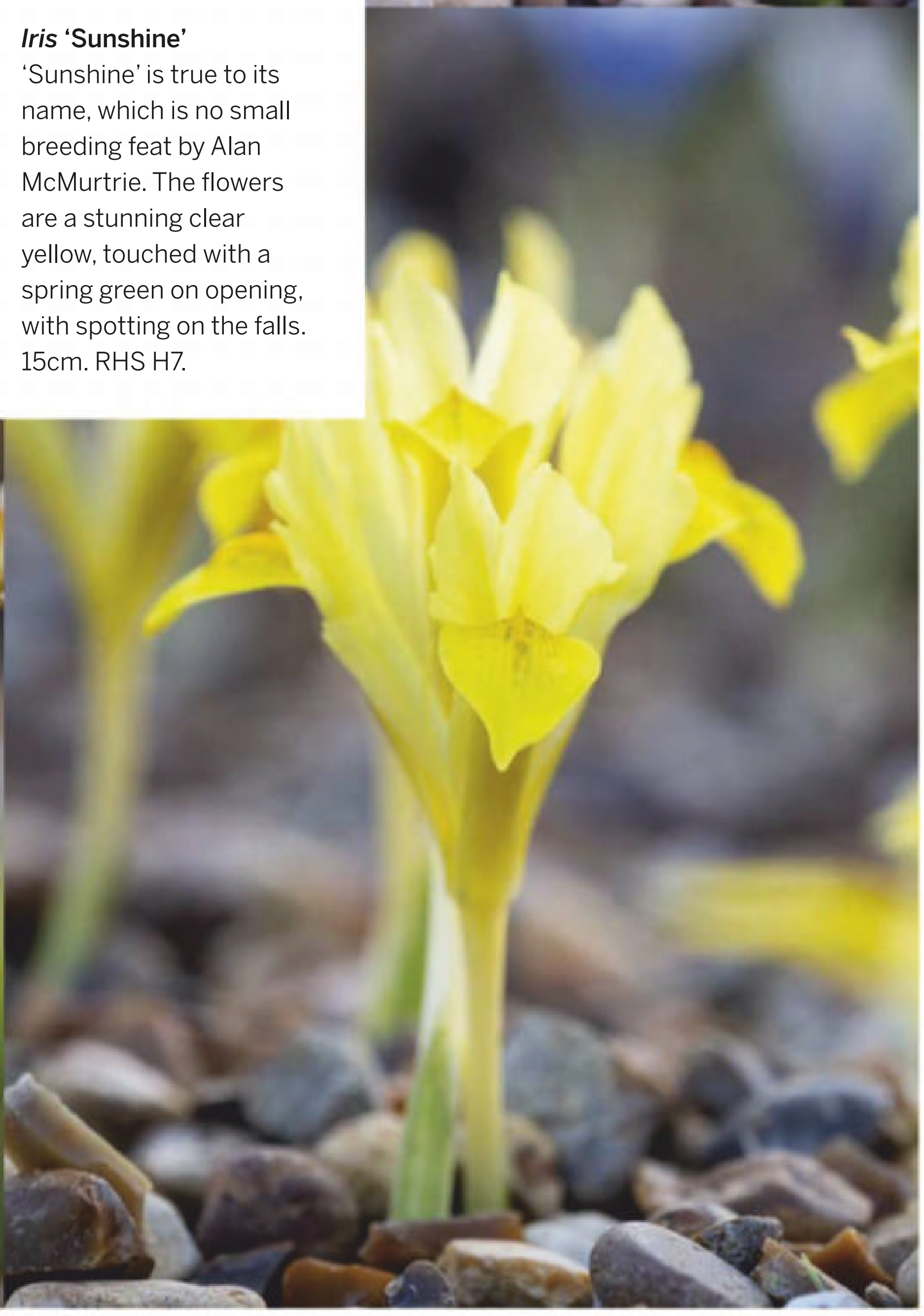
***Iris* 'Katharine Hodgkin'**
'Katharine Hodgkin' is a bewitching mixture of grey-blue freckles and veining and yellow. Bred in 1955 by EB Anderson from a cross between *I. histrioides* and *I. winogradowii*. 12cm. AGM. RHS H7.



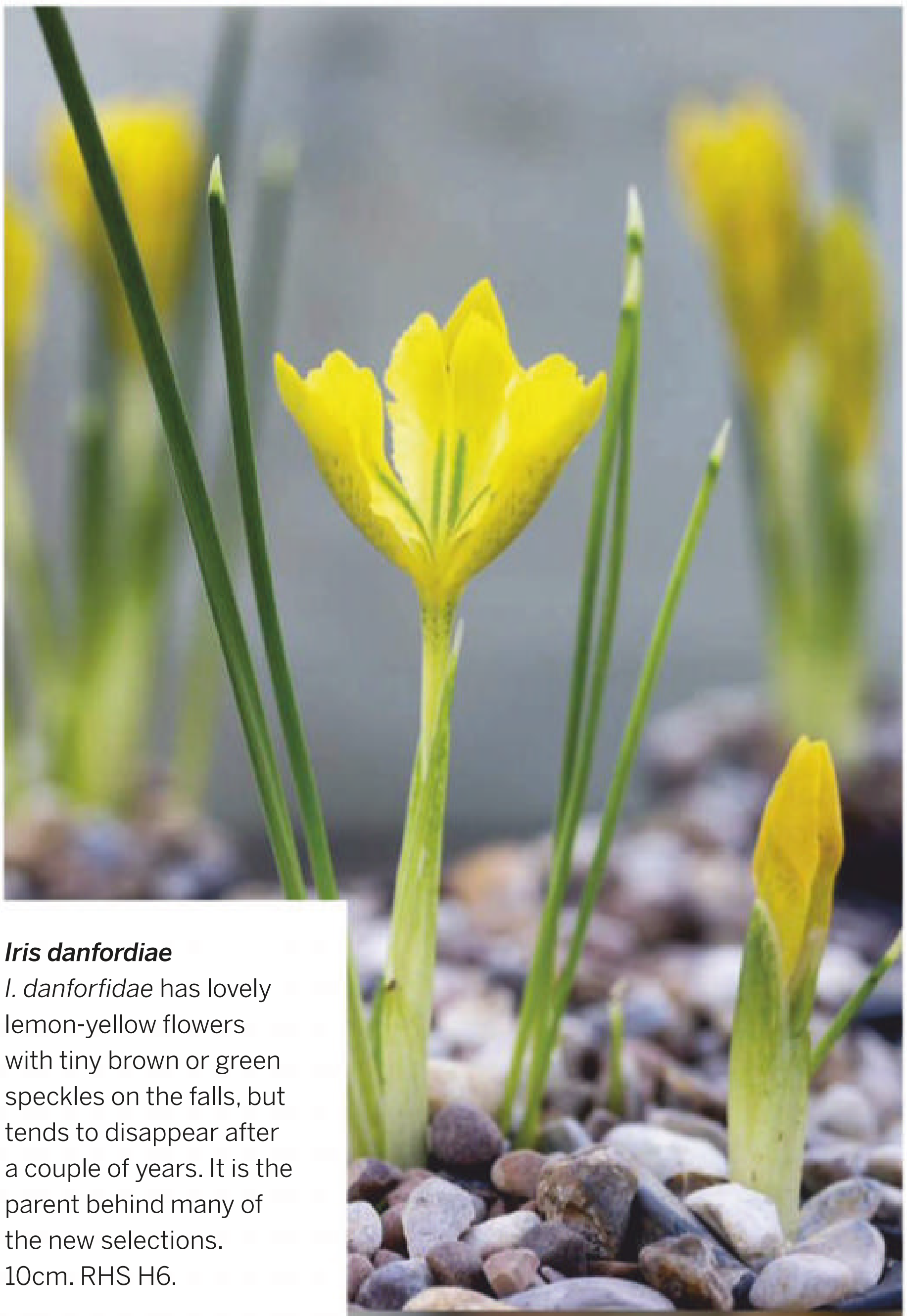
***Iris* 'Katherine's Gold'**
The offspring of 'Katharine Hodgkin' has her mother's good looks, but is pale lemon with near-white standards and pale grey-blue markings on the falls. Very arresting against a dressing of grit. 12cm. RHS H7.



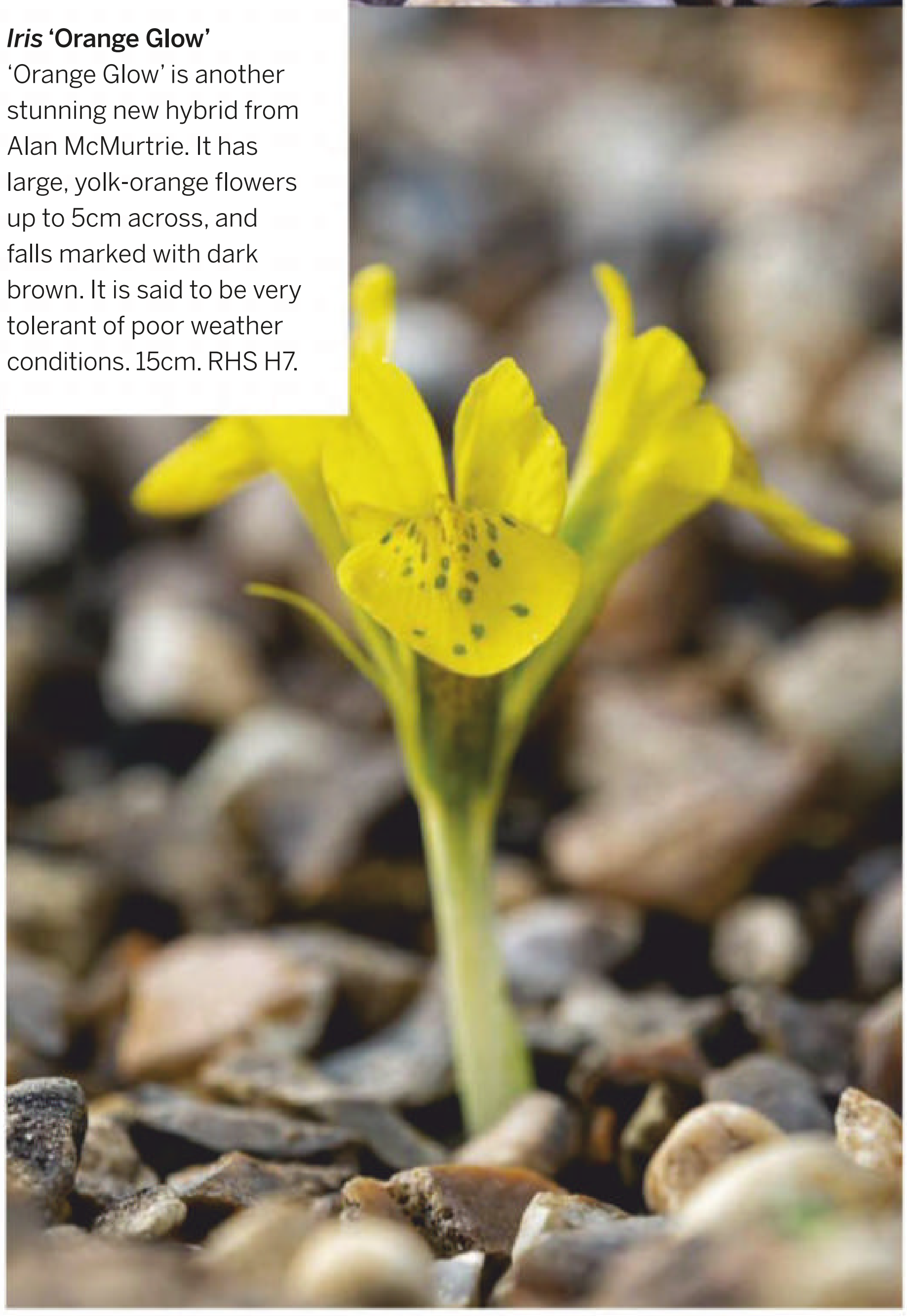
***Iris* 'North Star'**
'North Star' is another of Alan McMurtrie's yellows. It has ivory flowers with touches of lemon-yellow and deep turquoise towards the centre. Even better than its flowers is its truly exceptional scent. 15cm. RHS H7.



***Iris* 'Sunshine'**
'Sunshine' is true to its name, which is no small breeding feat by Alan McMurtrie. The flowers are a stunning clear yellow, touched with a spring green on opening, with spotting on the falls. 15cm. RHS H7.



Iris danfordiae
I. danforfidae has lovely lemon-yellow flowers with tiny brown or green speckles on the falls, but tends to disappear after a couple of years. It is the parent behind many of the new selections. 10cm. RHS H6.



***Iris* 'Orange Glow'**
'Orange Glow' is another stunning new hybrid from Alan McMurtrie. It has large, yolk-orange flowers up to 5cm across, and falls marked with dark brown. It is said to be very tolerant of poor weather conditions. 15cm. RHS H7.

THANKS TO JACQUES AMAND INTERNATIONAL NURSERY AND RHS HYDE HALL, ESSEX, WHERE THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN.

Cultivation

Irises in the Reticulata group are easy enough in pots. They need rich compost with plenty of drainage and work best in Alpine pans or terracotta pots. Repot them every two or three years to make space for the bulblets. Pots should be kept away from the worst of the winter's wet. Cold frames and Alpine houses are ideal, but if that's a world away from your space, a pane of glass over the pot until signs of growth are visible in January will work just fine.

You can cheat and bring pots indoors to speed up flowering. It's quite understandable to do this in the depths of January, but keep them somewhere cool, otherwise the whole shebang will be over before it has started.

It is very possible to establish good clumps of these wonderful irises in the garden, but you must choose the right cultivars and they will need good drainage. They hate nothing more than sitting with wet feet. If you have heavy soil, one way around this is to plant either in a raised bed or on a mound. This could be as simple as just adding more garden soil to an area to raise it. Don't plant the bulbs too near deciduous trees as you need as long a growing season as possible to get good flowers the following year and tree roots tend to rob the soil of moisture, which is key come the leaf stage. It's worth planting some bulbs in a sunny location and others in partial shade, as this will extend the season.

The temptation is to plant the bulbs close together so you get a more impressive display in year one, but this will mean they compete with each other for spring moisture, so it is worth giving each bulb a little more space so that it can bulk up. The bulbs should be planted at a depth of around 7cm and should be planted 10cm apart.

Forms that have been bred by Alan McMurtrie tend to derive from *I. danfordiae*, so it is worth digging them up every three years or so and dividing them to prevent the bulblets from crowding each other out. The smaller bulblets should be planted slightly closer to the soil surface, around 1-1.5cm deep. If you leave them at the base of the original bulb and don't divide, the smallest bulblets get buried under their larger sibling and tend to lack the energy to come into leaf.

Dividing should be done as the leaves are starting to die back at the end of June. The flowers might only have reached 15cm or so, but by June the leaves will be 45-60cm long. The bulb forms at the base of each leaf, so whether you are digging plants up or just weeding around them be very careful not to damage the base of the leaf or you will inevitably damage next year's blooms.

If you find the bulbs are rotting off or not reappearing, the first assumption is that the drainage is inadequate, and the answer is more grit. Finally, its worth top-dressing pots and mulching around garden plants so that the flowers are not splashed with soil in the rain and spoiled.

Where to see and buy

- **Avon Bulbs**
  Burnt House Farm,
  Mid Lambrook,
  South Petherton,
  Somerset TA13 5HE.
  Tel 01460 242177,
  avonbulbs.co.uk
- **Jacques Amand International**
  The Nurseries, Clamp Hill,
  Stanmore,
  Middlesex HA7 3JS.
  Tel 020 8420 7110,
  jacquesamandintl.com
- **RHS Garden Hyde Hall**
  Creephedge Lane,
  Rettendon, Chelmsford,
  Essex CM3 8RA.
  Tel 01245 402019,
  rhs.org.uk

Tools of the trade

Do you find yourselves reaching time and again for the same tool as you head into the garden? We asked six experts to reveal which tool they couldn't garden without

PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MONTGOMERY

There is a sense that the tools you use in the garden say something about who you are as a gardener and your approach to the task in hand: practical and spontaneous (it takes a strong will not to get distracted by a stray weed spotted out of the corner of your eye) or more methodical and carefully planned? The more you garden, the more familiar you become with your tools and learn to love their feel and their function. What should never be forgotten though is that tools do need a little care and attention. After each session in the garden, clean and dry your tools and where necessary keep blades sharp and mechanisms oiled. This way a quality tool will last years – if not generations.

Curator
RHS Garden Wisley

Matthew Pottage

Folding pruning saw

The tool I couldn't be without is my folding pruning saw by Silky. I was introduced to them when I was training at RHS Garden Wisley as a student some 14 years ago and immediately bought one, and now could never be working in the garden without it. There is nothing more satisfying than making an accurate, clean, good-quality pruning cut, and I find this is the answer. The blade tends to last me around a year and then it can easily be replaced. I use them for all manner of pruning, such as shrub pruning, dead-wooding and lifting the lower branches of trees. Their shape and style means you can get into the smallest of places, while still doing a great job, and the blade can lock into a second position that almost bends back on itself for the most awkward of spaces. To date, I've never bent or snapped the blade which can happen with some pruning saws – a sure sign of a quality pruning saw.

Nursery owner
Special Plants

Derry Watkins

Carbon blade scissors

I have a gardening bumbag with labels, pens, string and most importantly my florist's scissors. I don't go out for even five minutes in the garden without it. I can't bear to waste time looking for a tool, so I do almost all my gardening with these carbon steel florist's scissors. They are strong and sharp (carbon steel takes a better edge than stainless steel, and can be sharpened up again). With the points together my scissors root out dandelions, tease out seedlings to be replanted, or extricate weeds from between gnarled roots. Holding them flat to the ground and scuffling them back and forth, you can use them as a mini-hoe. They will cut almost anything a pair of secateurs would, up to about 5mm. For anything bigger I have to get the loppers, so it often doesn't get done. Before I organised the bumbag, I used to have them in my hip pocket (your leg won't bend far enough back for them to poke you). The important thing is having them to hand.

Head gardener
Great Dixter

Fergus Garrett

Boards

We are on heavy clay at Great Dixter, and even though the ground has been gardened for more than 100 years, border work can turn into a slimy mess at the turn of a cloud. Crushed horticultural grit comes to the rescue, making the soil easier to handle, as does dollops of compost, which increases the friability of the soil allowing it to take more abuse from feet, knees and tools in wet weather. But total protection comes from boards. These spread your weight and allow access into the borders without putting too much pressure on the ground. They also cover up areas that have been opened up prior to planting, deflecting the rain, and allowing you immediate access to the soil without waiting for the ground to dry. We have wide ones, thin ones, long ones and short ones, all raided (with permission) from skips and left over from building works. Some hang around for years and become recognisable by their ragged edges and become favourites. I can't imagine gardening without them.

I first saw it in use many years ago on my first visit to Japan, being used to cut rice crops in the paddy fields

Cut flower grower
Chatsworth House

Becky Crowley

String line

The cutting garden at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire comprises one third of the three-acre kitchen garden. The string-line is a vital tool to ensuring that I plant my flowers in rows in a similar style to the vegetables being grown in the rest of the kitchen garden. I usually plant into 1-1.2m wide beds, so a post will go into the ground at each end of a bed pulling the string taught and giving me a straight line to plant along. I then move the line along until the bed has been filled with three or four rows, depending on the ultimate size of the plants.

This particular string-line was made by my colleagues years ago out of two metal stakes that originally formed part of the Chatsworth garden sign posts. The baler twine usually lasts a good few years before needing to be replaced – something that needs to be done this year before the next planting frenzy begins.

Head gardener
Gravetye Manor

Tom Coward

Weeding trowel

This is a tool that I learned about while guest gardening at Chanticleer, in Pennsylvania, USA about ten years ago. The thing that impressed me the most was its versatility; it can be used as a trowel for normal weeding but it's also very strong and so is perfect for more robust weeds, such as ash seedlings and brambles. Because it is quite narrow, it is also useful for planting plug plants and weeding in paving cracks or between rocks; and the serrated edge makes it useful for sawing through roots when dividing perennials.

After using the tool for a month at Chanticleer, my host must have seen what fun I was having with it and so kindly gave it to me as souvenir. At Gravetye Manor in Sussex with an extensive kitchen garden, herbaceous borders, meadow and orchard area to look after, I have probably used it almost every day.

Plantsman, author and
holder of Victoria Medal
of Honour from RHS

Roy Lancaster

Japanese rice cutter

My favourite tool is a Japanese rice cutter, a hand held tool comprising a light wooden handle and a curved steel blade, the inner edge of which is sharply serrated. I first saw it in use many years ago on my first visit to Japan, being used to cut rice crops in the paddy fields and I was fascinated by the ease with which the blade sliced the rice stems. One of my Japanese companions persuaded a harvester to part with his blade, which I managed to bring home in my hold baggage. I've since seen them for sale in agricultural suppliers, garden centres even.

I found an immediate use for it in my garden when removing dead or unwanted top growth of perennials, especially those with leathery, prickly or otherwise obstinate growth, such as the dead leaves of dieramas. As with all such cuttings tools I wipe the blade clean after use and apply a thin coat of oil to protect it against rust.

WHERE TO BUY

Folding pruning saw Matthew's saw is from Japanese supplier Silky (Tel 01981 590224, silkyfox.co.uk).
Carbon blade scissors Derry's scissors come from Oasis Home & Hobby (Tel 0880 123 9114, oasishomeandhobby.co.uk).
String line Vintage examples can be found at Garden and Wood (Tel 01844 279170, gardenandwood.co.uk). Or for new, vintage-style, metal string line go to crocus.co.uk
Weeding trowel Sometimes called *Hori Hori* trowels, these can be found at Japanese suppliers, such as Niwaki (Tel 01747 445059 niwaki.com). Or try Primrose (Tel 0118 903 5210. primrose.co.uk).
Rice cutter Available as an herbaceous sickle from Niwaki (see above).

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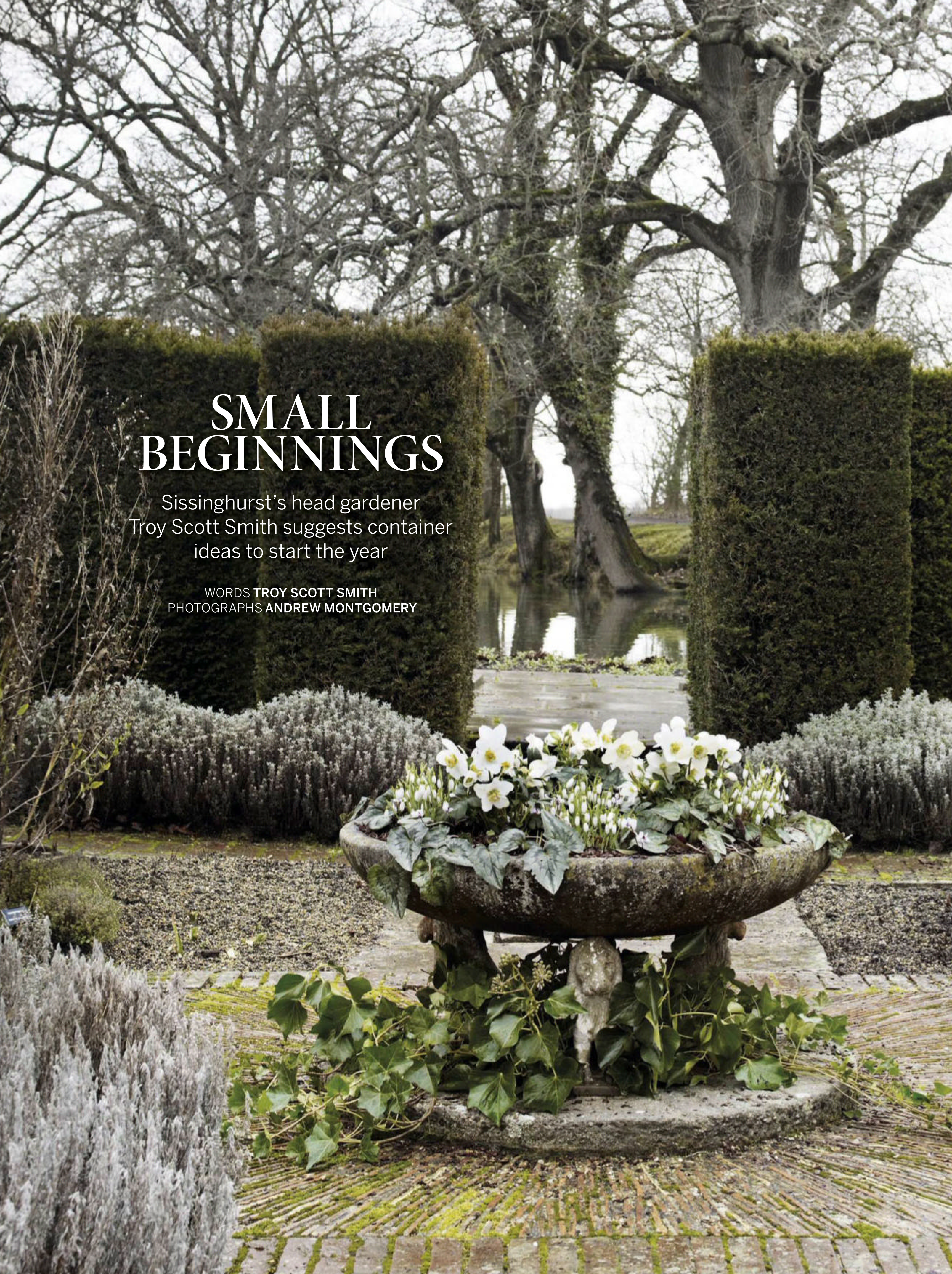
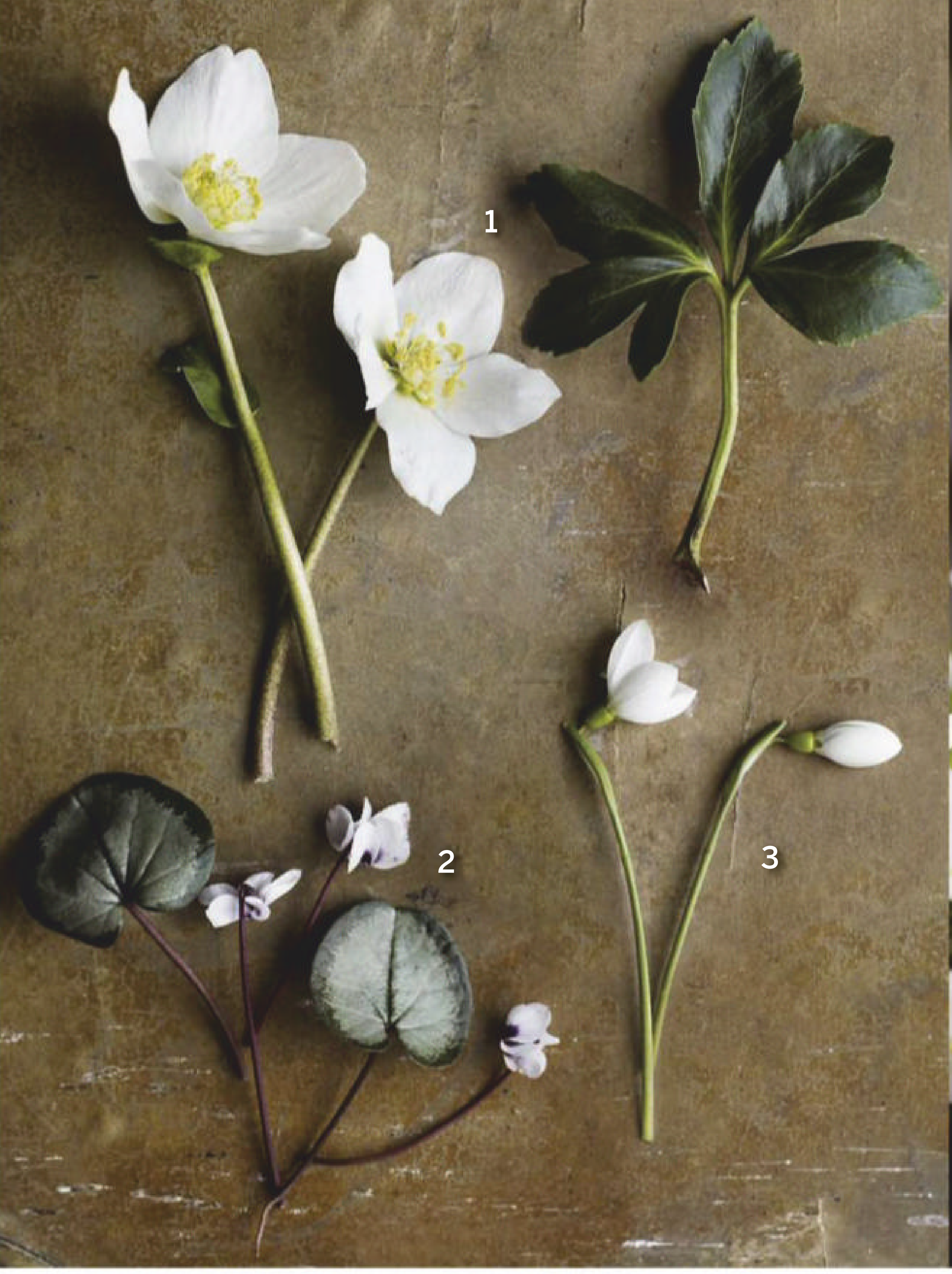


SMALL BEGINNINGS

Sissinghurst's head gardener Troy Scott Smith suggests container ideas to start the year

WORDS **TROY SCOTT SMITH**
PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**



FRESH START

Like so many of the wonderful pots at Sissinghurst, this marble bowl in the Herb Garden is such a magnificent object it really doesn't need any flowers, particularly in summer when scented plants froth in abundance around the three lions on which it sits. But in winter when the garden is stripped back, we are free to experiment and the occasional well-positioned planted pot provides a moment of delight.

How to achieve the look

For a number of years I have enjoyed the challenge of growing the sometimes difficult to please *Helleborus niger*. The simple pleasure on Christmas morning of not only harvesting home-grown Brussels sprouts, but also a few stalks of the Christmas rose for decorating the dinner table is immeasurable. Although the main protagonist in this display is the hellebore in tandem with the snowdrop, I think the scheme requires the addition of a different flower shape and colour to lift the relatively monochromatic hue. While the flower colour of *Cyclamen coum* f. *pallidum* 'Album' has an uncomfortable disconnect with the hellebore and snowdrop, by adding a few plants of *Cyclamen hederifolium* (seen in the main picture here and which by now has finished flowering), with purple-red petioles and undersides to its foliage, it adds a colour harmony to the flowers of *C. coum* and a unifying presence to the entire display. This kind of temporary pot culture provides the opportunity to grow plants that are not necessarily easy bedfellows. For example, I have learned from experience that in a permanent setting I wouldn't choose to plant *C. coum* and *C. hederifolium* together as the latter can threaten to overrun its neighbour. You can also manipulate the soil in a pot more easily than in beds and borders. Semi-woodland plants, such as the cyclamen and snowdrop that need a permanent home in shade can sometimes be quite happy on holiday, as it were, in a sunny location.

Plants

1 *Helleborus niger*
So that I have new flowering-size plants each year, I collect seed. This germinates readily if sown fresh and will be at flowering size within three years. 30cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b†.

2 *Cyclamen coum* f. *pallidum* 'Album'
During growth in winter keep moist and apply a balanced liquid fertiliser monthly. Be careful not to let plants dry out completely in summer when dormant. 10cm.

3 *Galanthus* sp.
Almost any snowdrop would work, this was chosen for its fresh-green foliage that works well with the purity of the hellebore flowers.

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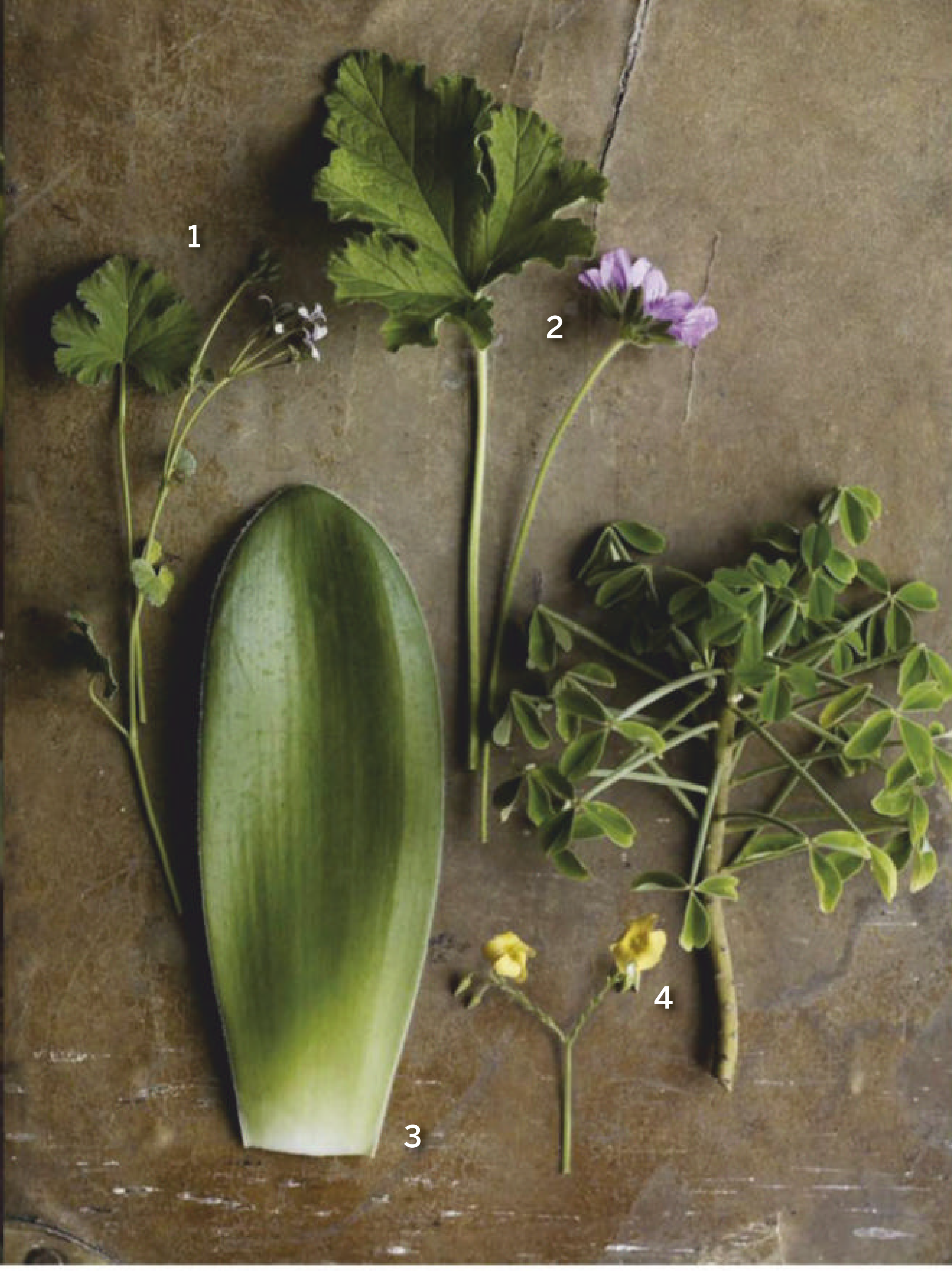
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



INSIDE STORY

Located in the innermost garden at Sissinghurst is the South Cottage where Harold had an office and Vita a flower room. In this sparsely furnished room Vita would not only bring flowers for arranging and observing, but store garden tools, and it is also said that Abdul, a donkey she and Harold rescued from Morocco would occasionally use the room as a stable. Knowing this history I felt compelled to bring flowers back into this room.

How to achieve the look

There is a received wisdom that winter-flowering plants – whether in pots or in beds and borders – should be located near the house or at least somewhere you pass daily. I used to think this too, but am increasingly convinced this needn't be so. I often now create displays at points far from the house so that I'm encouraged to take in otherwise overlooked details of the garden in winter on the way. On the other hand there is something luxurious about growing and bringing plants indoors. Many of the plants in this display in Vita's former flower room are tender so it feels less of an indulgence to bring them inside. But that wasn't my primary consideration. Instead they have all been chosen for their collective tone. I didn't simply want to bring 'colour' in, but instead to create a feeling of authenticity, spontaneity and a depth of expression. No single plant in the arrangement assumes a starring role, although the large, striking hippeastrum bulbs are beginning to assert their presence. A relative of *Amaryllis*, these tender bulbs from South America need to be planted in a pot indoors. They will produce stunning flowers about six to eight weeks after planting, and if you pot up a few bulbs at a time from October to January you should have flowers from Christmas to Easter. What I also like about this kind of casual display is that you can keep it fresh by removing or adding plants. You can also pick flowers, such as the snowdrops, from the garden, pop them into a vase and add them to the potted display.

Plants

1 *Pelargonium fragrans*
Small white flowers and light-green leaves scented of pine.
25cm. RHS H1C.
2 *Pelargonium* 'Attar of Roses'
A robust plant with soft-green leaves and many pink flowers with a delicious rose scent.
45cm. AGM*. RHS H1C.
3 *Haemanthus albiflos*
Easy to grow with evergreen shiny spathe-like leaves which have a covering of soft hair. White flowers appear during winter.
25cm. AGM. RHS H2.
4 *Oxalis teneriensis*
Tall shrub-like plant with bright-yellow flowers and delicate foliage. 90cm.

DELICATE BEAUTY

Vita loved growing alpines and miniature bulbs of all kinds; she likened their intricate beauty to a Fabergé egg. She wrote a great deal about raising these little treasures up out of the ground so that one could enjoy them at close quarters rather than crawling on all fours with what she described as her incipient lumbago. She practised what she wrote and had many stone troughs and window boxes at Sissinghurst where she specifically grew these plants.

How to achieve the look

In the 18th and 19th centuries, theatres, such as this, were a popular way of displaying many small plants, most traditionally auriculas. Lined up in pots on shelves the beauty of each plant can be examined at close quarters, while the theatre also protects the delicate plants from the worst of the weather. We use this simple wooden theatre, made from pieces of reclaimed oak, to display all kinds of plants including auriculas, but in winter it becomes an ideal place to display reticulate irises. Although I have used these miniature irises to good effect in beds and borders, they are perhaps best suited to pot culture. Gently forced indoors with heat and light *Iris reticulata* and *Iris danfordiae* x *histrioides* will be in flower from early February. Once they are flowering, ensure you keep them cool or do as I do and relocate them to a sheltered place outdoors so that their flowering period is prolonged. The flowers are completely unaffected by snow and frost. I love the fact that these kind of displays allow you to not think too hard about what goes with what, rather it provides an opportunity to trial all kinds of varieties before committing to planting them in the ground. Vita would probably have approved. ‘There are many places where all these tinies may be grown,’ she wrote. ‘On the top of a dry stone wall; in the rock garden; flourishing in troughs or in a flagged path… or grown in a clay pot where they get the drainage they like’.

Plants

Here I’ve used cultivars of *Iris reticulata* and related species, including the white and blue ‘Eye Catcher’, the pale-yellow ‘North Star’, bright yellow ‘Sunshine’, the lovely ‘Lady Beatrix Stanley’ with pale-blue flowers and a mass of dark spotting on the falls, and the snowdrop *Galanthus* ‘Atkinsii’. You could also try other cultivars, such as the sky-blue *Iris* ‘Cantab’ and the purple-flowering ‘George’. The January-flowering species *I. danfordiae* or hybrids between *I. histrioides* and *I. reticulata*, such as ‘Harmony’ and ‘Pauline’, are also worth growing. For more ideas on reticulate iris, see our plant profile on page 62.

IN BALANCE WITH NATURE

Nurture your garden with Korean Natural Farming, a holistic and sustainable system of soil improvement

WORDS JOSHUA SPARKES ILLUSTRATION VICKI TURNER

Healthy soil allows gardeners to achieve and grow so much, like nutrient-packed vegetables and beautiful flowers. It helps us to fight the ill effects of climate change, such as drought, to control pests and diseases, and to maintain our gardens in a clean and safe manner removing the need for harmful chemicals and helping to create a diverse and rich ecosystem.

Maybe we should take more inspiration from nature's approach to soil. Nature doesn't cultivate or double dig, she doesn't overfeed or use synthetic fertilisers, and she doesn't overmulch. She prefers leaner conditions in which to grow plants, mollycoddled and ready for anything, good or bad.

And so to Korean Natural Farming (KNF), a holistic system of soil improvement that works with the rhythms of nature, supporting the biology of the soil. It aims to provide plants and soil microbes with everything they need at every stage of their growing life. Developed over the past 40 years, initially in Japan, it merges traditional farming techniques from Korea and is increasingly popular with gardeners.

KNF is a world of acronyms, bubbling buckets, curious minds, strong stomachs, and a well-stocked pantry. It uses homemade herbal extracts with names like OHN, IMO, BRV, FPJ, JMS and WCA, fermentations and fertilisers that cultivate microbes and help maintain healthy soil and beautiful plants. It's about making probiotic treatments for your garden, similar to the benefits of eating *kimchi* (which also originates from Korea, and is said to aid digestion and create healthy gut bacteria).

Although it may sound a little daunting to think about improving your garden soil in this way, it really is easy. Many of the necessary ingredients can be grown, harvested or foraged. Recipes can contain nettles, comfrey, eggshells, ginger, sea water, vodka and even beer, all mixed, steeped and fermented to make foods and tinctures for the garden. KNF stresses the use of local materials and natural ingredients, all on a small-scale basis. It helps you improve your garden soil in a way that uses generally local, natural and homemade ingredients, and is cost-effective and sustainable, reducing your environmental impact on the planet.

Indigenous micro-organisms (IMOs) are the bread and butter of KNF. It's all about cultivating beneficial and, importantly, native microbes, in particular fungi and their mycorrhiza, harvested from a local environment near your garden. These micro-organisms form important partnerships between the soil and plants, increasing nutrient and water uptake, and improving soil structure and nutrient release. Once you get the hang of it, it's easy to make.

On the face of it, improving your soil with concoctions rather than digging it over may seem radical, but as a sustainable system that will keep our gardens beautiful and our plants healthy, it has to be worth a try. □

Develop your own indigenous micro-organisms

To begin, partially cook organic, brown rice in water at a ratio of 1:1 for 20-30 minutes. Place the rice into a wooden box or basket (any practical size) at two-thirds full to allow air to circulate. Cover the container with a lid to limit excessive moisture from rain. Place the container under a healthy deciduous tree with plenty of surrounding leaf litter and cover it with leaves and soil.

After four or five days the rice should be covered in a white, almost hairy, culture – this is your IMO#1. If the culture is blue or green, discard it and try again.

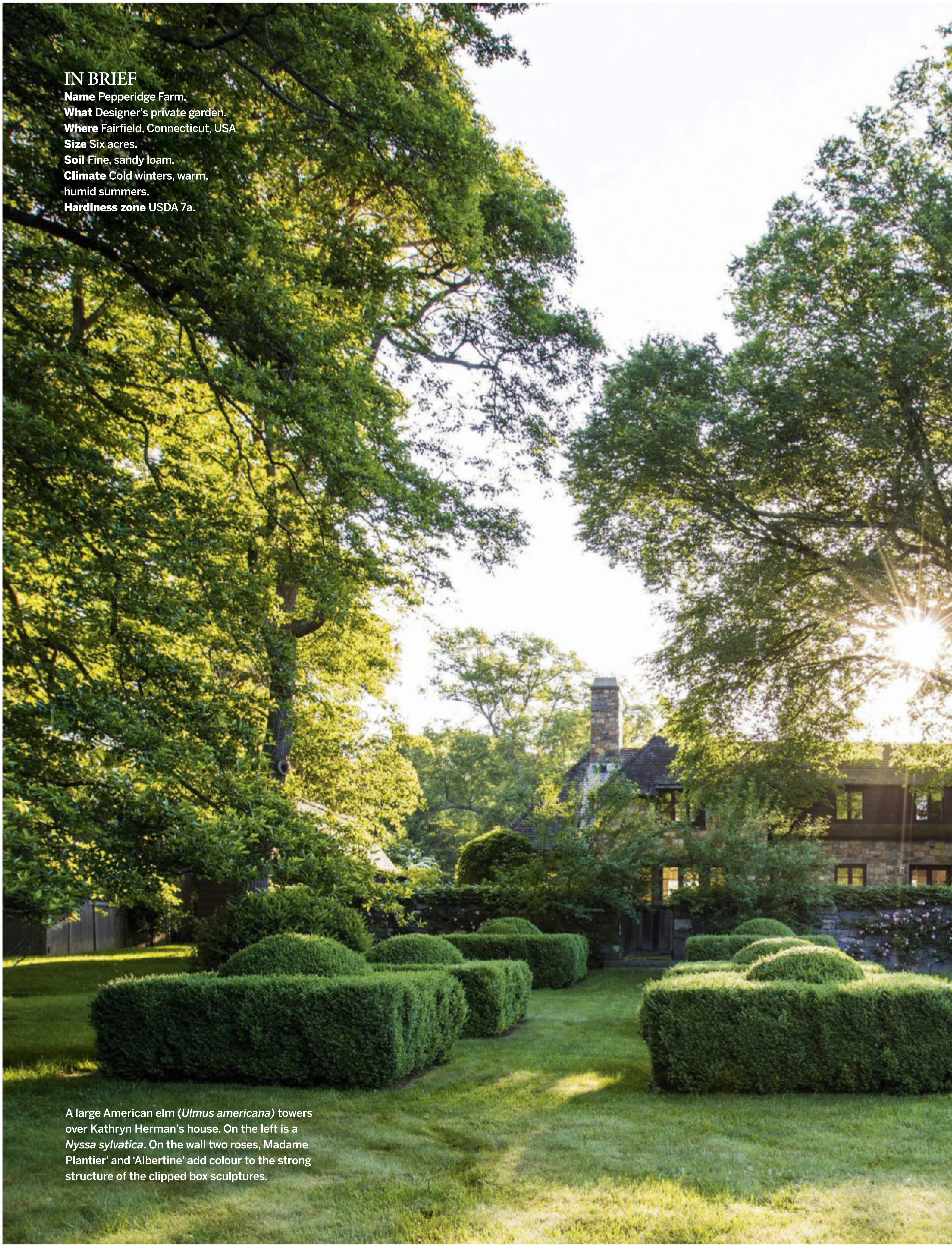
Mix 1:1 organic sugar and IMO#1 by weight, and place the fermentation in a jar two-thirds full. Place a muslin cloth over the jar and keep at warm room temperature for four to five days. You can store this IMO#2 ready for use.

Pour a bucket-sized heap of organic bran, such as oat bran on the surface of the your soil. Add a couple of handfuls of IMO#2 to a bucket of water, and pour it on to the pile slowly. Mix with a spade until all the bran is hydrated, spread into a mulch a few inches high, and cover with leaves or cardboard. It can overheat, so turn it like compost to keep the temperature down. After five days it will be covered in fungi and look like IMO#1 again.

Mix some garden soil, top soil or leaf mulch/garden compost with the biologically rich IMO#3 (native garden soil is best to allow the IMO to get used to your garden conditions). Gently mix 1:1 by volume. Leave it for a week, by which time it will be ready to apply.

When you come to apply the IMO, spread it on the surface of your soil a handful at a time (I use it around trees, perennials and shrubs in particular, and have seen great results here). Place 25cm of mulch on top but don't dig it in.

The IMO will begin to grow and spread like a living carpet, latching on and connecting everything together in your soil.



IN BRIEF

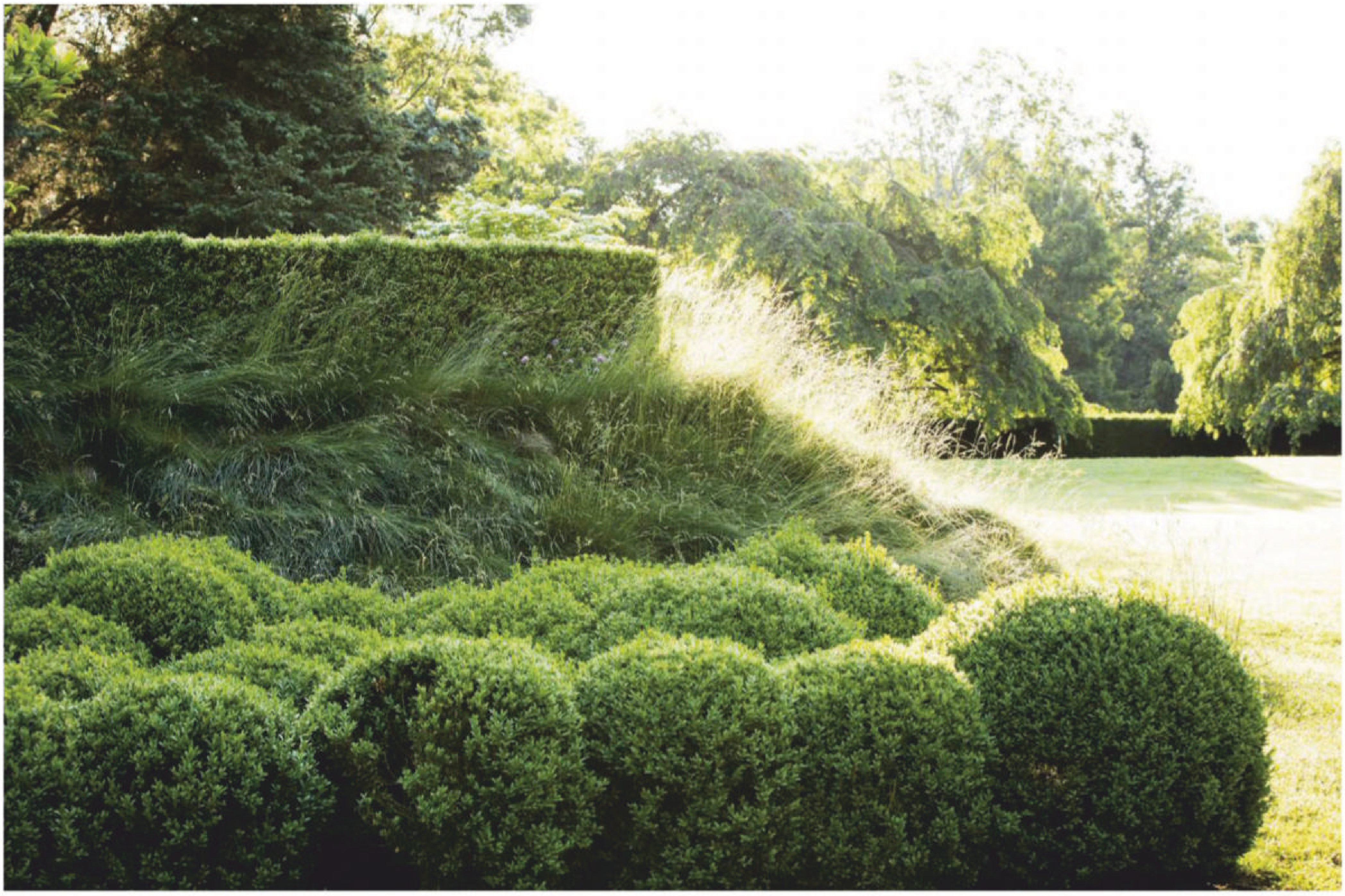
Name Pepperidge Farm.
What Designer's private garden.
Where Fairfield, Connecticut, USA
Size Six acres.
Soil Fine, sandy loam.
Climate Cold winters, warm, humid summers.
Hardiness zone USDA 7a.

A large American elm (*Ulmus americana)* towers over Kathryn Herman's house. On the left is a *Nyssa sylvatica*. On the wall two roses, Madame Plantier' and 'Albertine' add colour to the strong structure of the clipped box sculptures.

Another country

A designer's private garden in Connecticut, USA, inspired by great English gardens, that brings structure to the fore

WORDS **NOEL KINGSBURY** PHOTOGRAPHS **CLAIRE TAKACS**



Back in 2000, the American designer Kathryn Herman spent a week in England studying garden design under the tutelage of Penelope Hobhouse. It wasn't Kathryn's first visit to the UK, she was already smitten with the more famous gardens of Great Dixter and Sissinghurst, but the gardens she visited on this particular trip, especially that created by Canadian horticulturists Nori and Sandra Pope at Hadspen House in Somerset, opened her eyes to new possibilities. "It was such a magical week," she recalls. "We visited Pam Lewis's Sticky Wicket, we went to Penelope's own house at Bettiscombe and spent a lot of time with Nori and Sandra Pope."

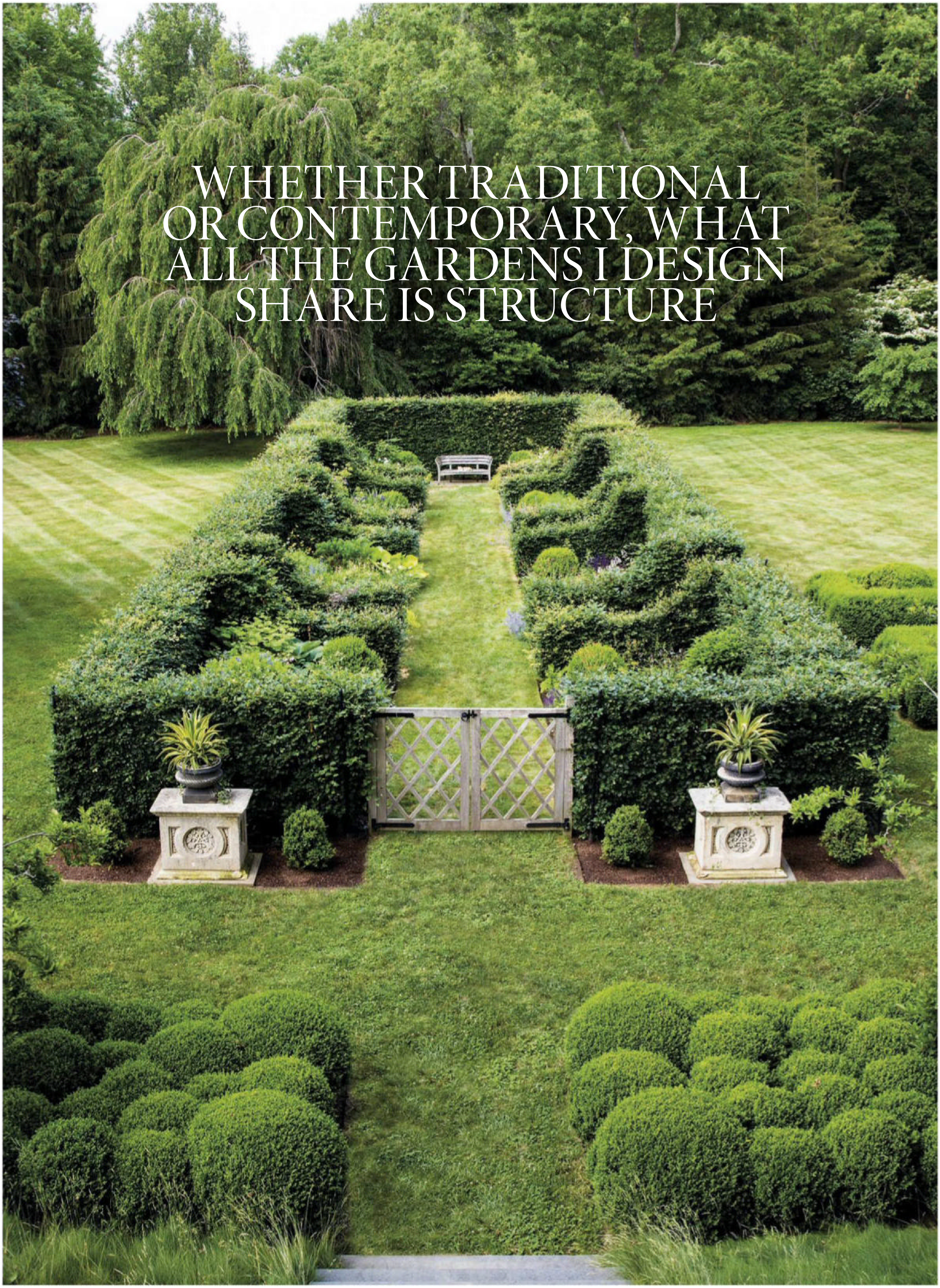
There are echoes of many of these gardens in Kathryn's own garden, but Hadspen House had a special resonance for Kathryn. From 1988 until they returned to Canada in 2005 the Popes created what was arguably one of the most sophisticated colour-themed gardens in the UK. Sadly, the garden they created no longer exists, but a small piece of it remains in Kathryn's own garden in the form of a 35m-long, double herbaceous border enclosed by beech hedging. "What I found to be so successful at Hadspen," says Kathryn, "was that it had been created in an old kitchen garden so it had the structure of the walls. I knew I needed to create a version of that for myself, so I used beech hedging." In Kathryn's version, beech buttresses divide the borders into eight compartments, each, as at Hadspen, limited to a single colour – pink, white, burgundy, chartreuse, silver, peach, purple, blue – with two smaller compartments filled with green boxwood underplanted with Kathryn's favourite plant, *Alchemilla mollis*. Perennials, such as *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Bevan's Variety', *Baptisia alba*, *Knautia macedonica* and *Angelica archangelica,* mixed with earth-coloured grasses, such as *Stipa gigantea* and a scattering of alliums and marginal hardy plants fill the borders throughout summer. The enclosed garden sits on a slight slope on an axis with both the master bedroom above and the formal living room below offering both a layered view of the elegant swooped hedges.

This perennial planting is a rare burst of colour in a garden that brings structure to the fore, with immaculately clipped and well-proportioned hedges of beech, yew and box that manage to fill the space but without dominating it. The house had originally been built as living quarters for staff of the Pepperidge Estate, a large farm complex, so called because of the many *Nyssa sylvatica*, known locally as pepperidge trees, and when Kathryn and her husband Ron bought it 20 years ago the

▷

Above
On the slope leading up to the house Kathryn has left an area of unmown grass between the box hedge and cloud-pruned box balls. This is a realistic treatment for steep banks, which are difficult to mow and which can dry out quickly too. She uses deep-rooted, drought tolerant fescues, which require minimal maintenance.

Facing page
Looking out from Kathryn's bedroom is her Hadspen-inspired perennial garden. "I love looking out my bedroom window each morning and seeing the perennial garden," says Kathryn. "It is the thing upon which I judge my day."



WHETHER TRADITIONAL OR CONTEMPORARY, WHAT ALL THE GARDENS I DESIGN SHARE IS STRUCTURE

▷ only garden was what had once been the vegetable garden. "But we were very lucky to inherit amazing legacy trees," says Kathryn. The couple also inherited eight domes of *Taxus* x *media* 'Hicksii' that had been planted in a group to the side of the house in the 1920s. At the rear of the house, Kathryn has created an echo of these domes, in sculptural blocks of boxwood that help to connect the house to the pool garden and out to the broader landscape.

Such geometry is very much at the core of the European formal garden tradition, and at the core of Kathryn's design philosophy. "Whether traditional or contemporary, what all the gardens I design share is structure. It's about creating sculpture and form with plants," she says. Structure involving big blocks of beech and hornbeam – she feels both are underused in American garden – has become something of a signature for the design practice Doyle Herman Design Associates Kathryn runs with her business partner James Doyle.

For a garden with such strong structure the meadow area is something of a surprise. "As a practice, we are trying to encourage people not to mow, and to leave seedheads up, both for the visual experience and for wildlife," says Kathryn. "We are trying out techniques, such as inserting plugs into the turf, to introduce the perennials we want, which are mostly natives. The meadow at Pepperidge Farm comes into its own later in the season. It is a work in progress to ensure that the balance of flowering plants versus grasses stays in check." Her own meadow is a hybrid of European turf-forming grasses, and mostly native American wildflowers, including *Penstemon digitalis*, *Verbena stricta* and *Daucus carota* and lots of milkweed, which says Kathryn, is loved by monarch butterflies.

The meadow creates a softness juxtaposed to the clipped hedges that give this garden its year-round appeal. Elsewhere in the garden Kathryn has left areas of unmown grass giving the whole garden an easiness. Keeping the hedging and topairy looking so neat requires a fair bit of maintenance. Kathryn largely looks after the garden herself, with help from a landscape crew. "Gardening gives me a lot of peace after a long day," she says. "I love to get my hands in the soil." ☐

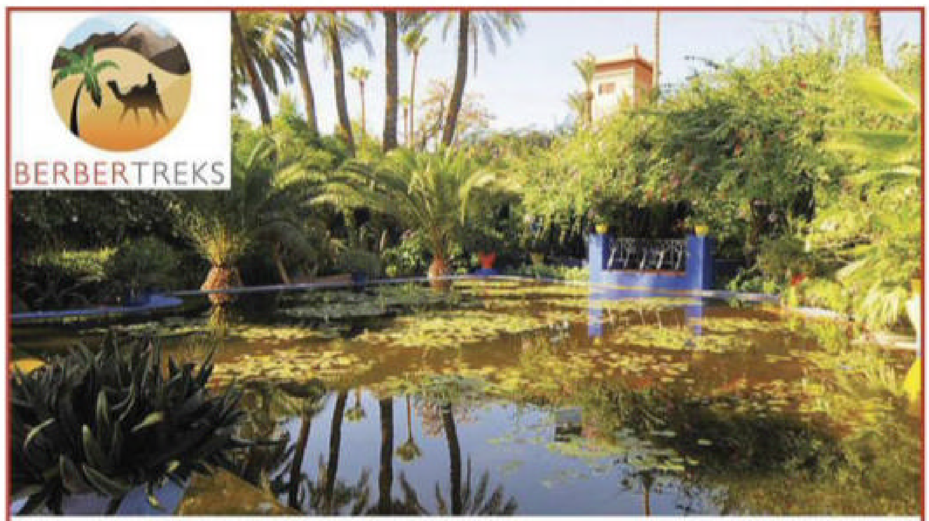
Above
Kathryn's meadow is delineated and given intention by being mown around the perimeter. A relatively new feature in American gardens, meadows are a compromise between the native grassland vegetation and the traditional lawn. They greatly reduce maintenance costs and are a biodiversity boon.

Facing page top
The water feature garden is a calm space that leads directly off the covered porch, where Kathryn likes to entertain in summer. At the rear is a line of pleached limes, *Tilia cordata*.

Facing page below
A group of large, muffin-shaped domes of yew (*Taxus* x *media* 'Hicksii') were planted in the 1920s by the original owners of the Pepperidge Estate – makers of a well-known brand of American baked goods.

USEFUL INFORMATION
Open Under the Garden Conservancy Open Days Program, 15 June 2019. Admission $10. gardenconservancy.org. Find out more about Kathryn's work at **dhda.com**

GARDENING GIVES ME A LOT OF PEACE AFTER A LONG DAY



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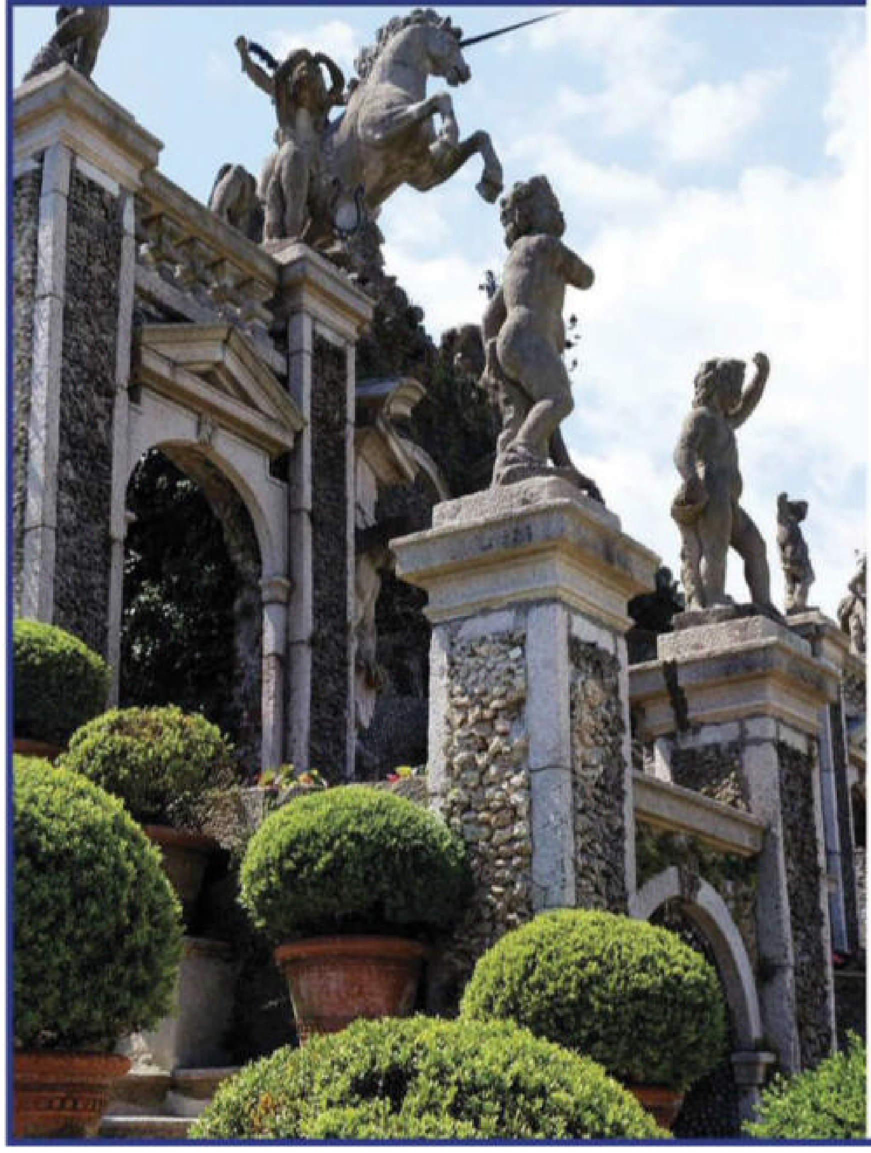
ITALIAN GARDENS



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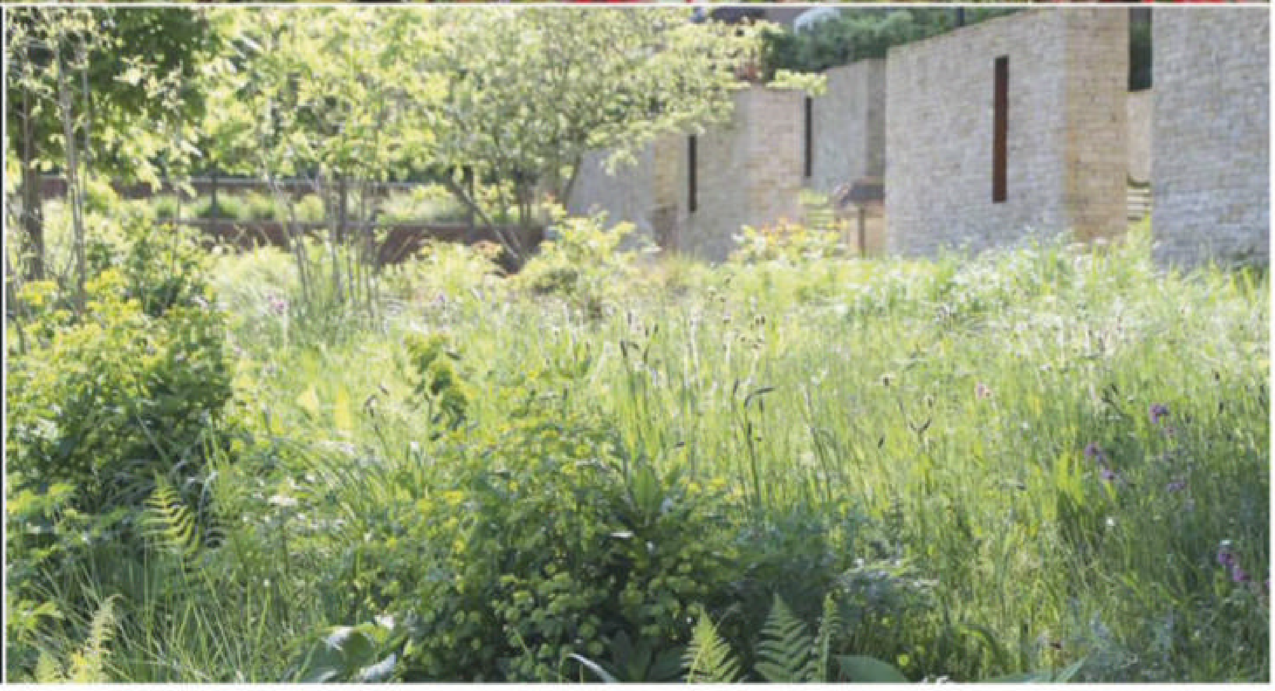

BALI WINNER

Bedfordshire-based landscape architect practice Bowles & Wyer has won the Grand Award at the 42nd BALI National Landscape Awards for its build of a private garden in the Chilterns. The richly planted garden, designed by Gavin McWilliam and Andrew Wilson, was a complex project, entailing major earthworks, the installation of attenuation drainage, hard paving and the construction of multiple walls and terraces, As well as taking the top award, the project also won the category for Domestic Garden Construction for schemes over £250,000, **bowleswyer.co.uk**

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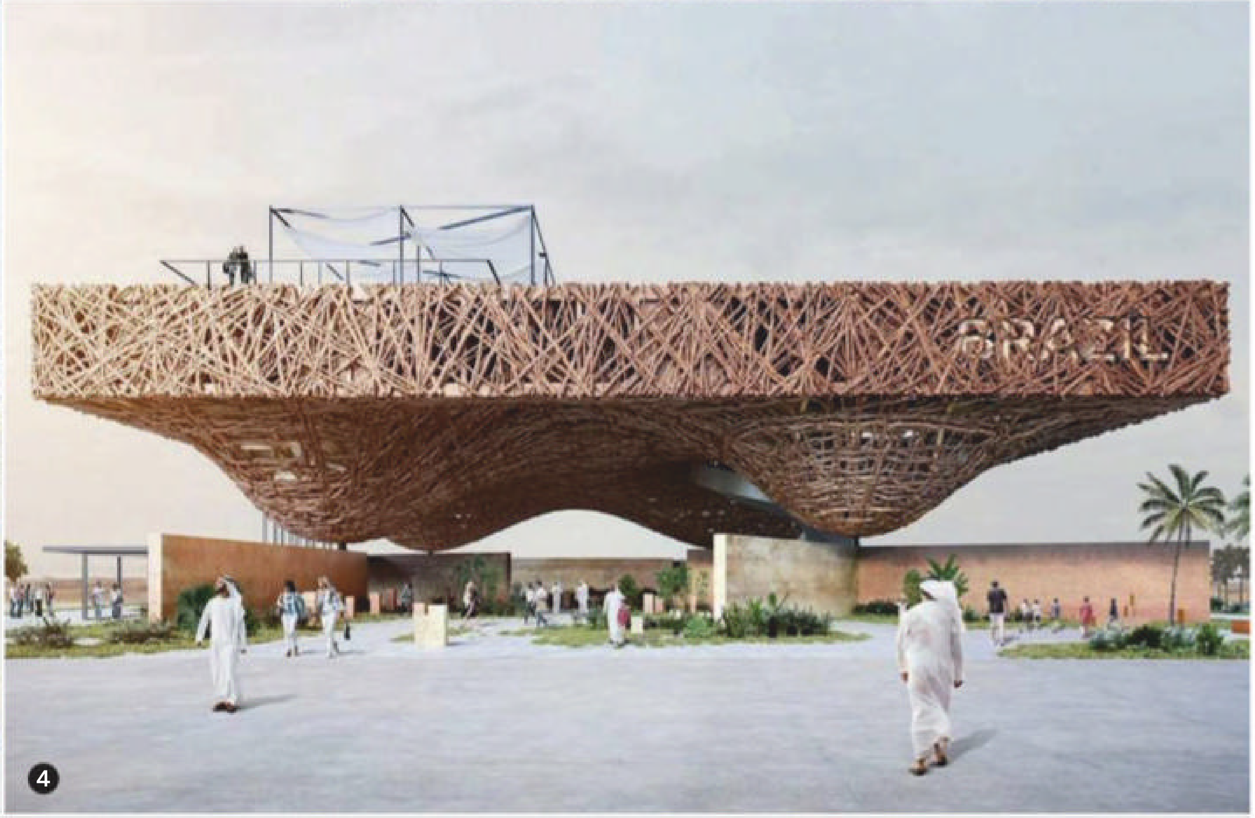


① WINERY GARDEN

Marian Boswall Landscape Architects has created a contemporary garden at Tillingham Winery in East Sussex. Boswall's design for the planting around the buildings, which are being refurbished by RX Architects, borrows from the surrounding countryside. The grid pattern of the planting beds has been informed by the arrangement of vines in the biodynamically managed vineyard, and the mix of perennials and grasses has been selected to attract pollinators. Textured concrete, recycled farmyard metals and clay vessels from the wine-making process help to anchor the scheme. **marianboswall.com**

② LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE AWARDS

Churchman Landscape Architects has won the Landscape Institute's Presidential Award for its design for South Gardens, Elephant Park, in southeast London. Churchman's brief for the first phase of Elephant Park, a new residential complex at Elephant and Castle, was to design the residential green spaces, including three communal courtyards, two communal roof terraces and 11 green roofs. Working with ecologist Gary Grant, the design team developed planting regimes that provide maximum species diversity, and habitats for insects, birds and bats. **churchmanlandscapearchitects.co.uk**

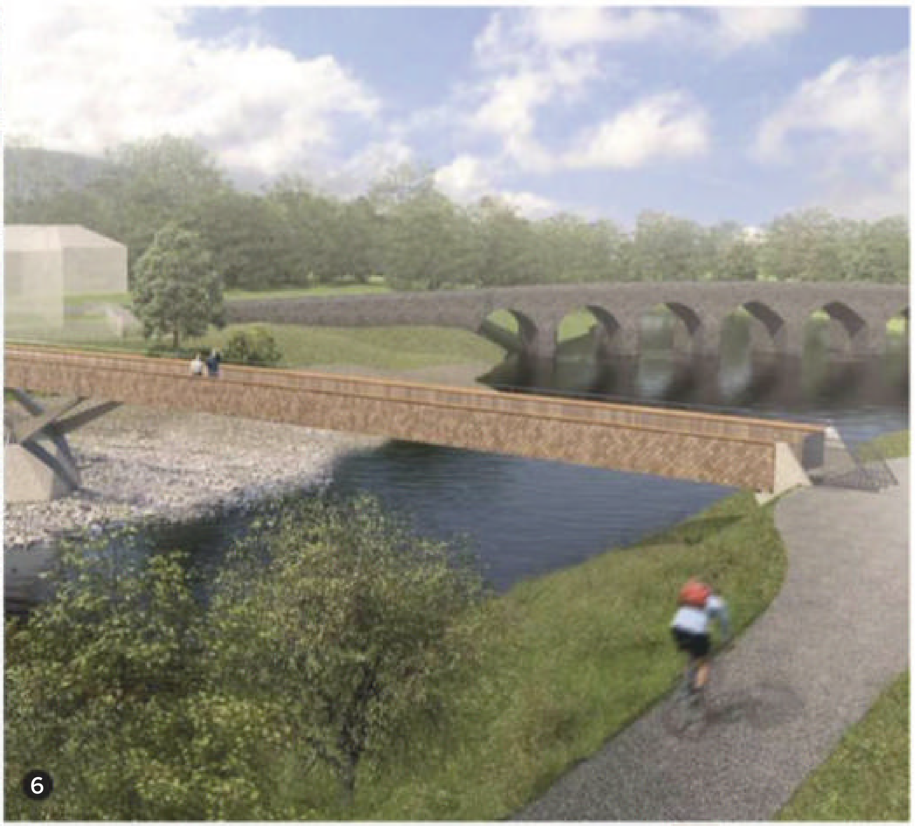
③ SKY GARDEN

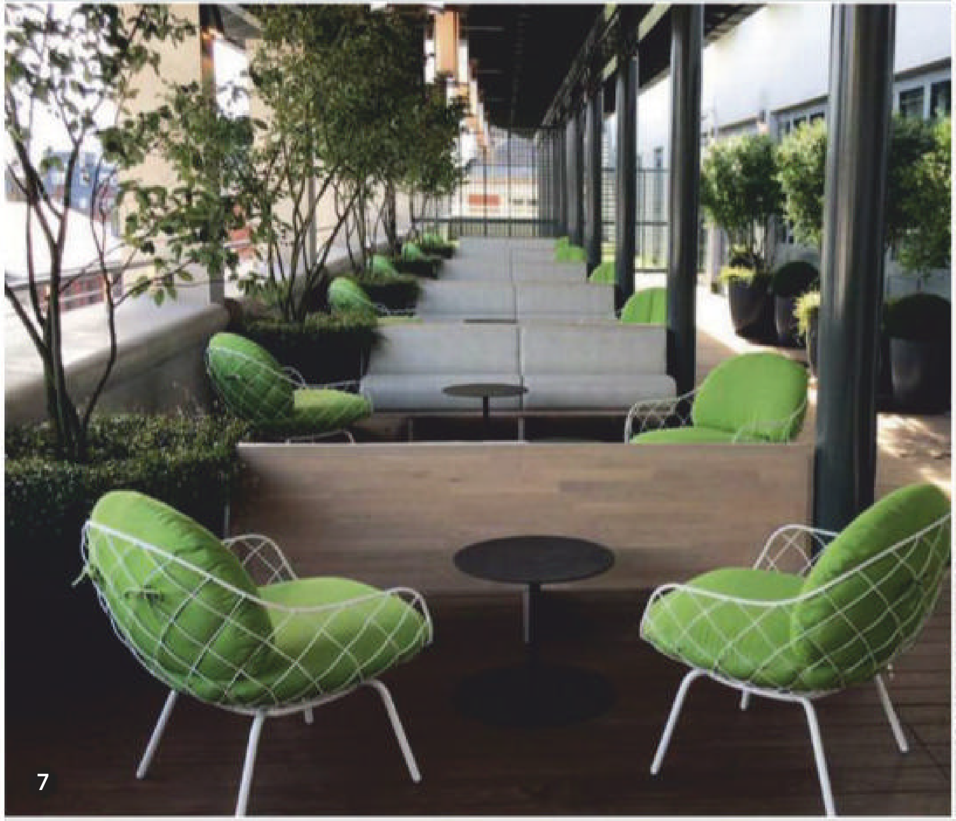
London-based architecture practice Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners has won an international competition to transform an area of reclaimed land in Shenzhen, China. Its winning masterplan for the city's Qianhai area includes a 1,200m sky garden raised above a roadway and creates a new slow-paced route linking adjacent plots. At one end of the raised garden is a new waterfront area, which will feature an opera house and convention centre, with ferry links across Qianhai Bay. At the other end, a high-rise glass tower will be planted with gardens at various levels, including the rooftop. **rsh-p.com**

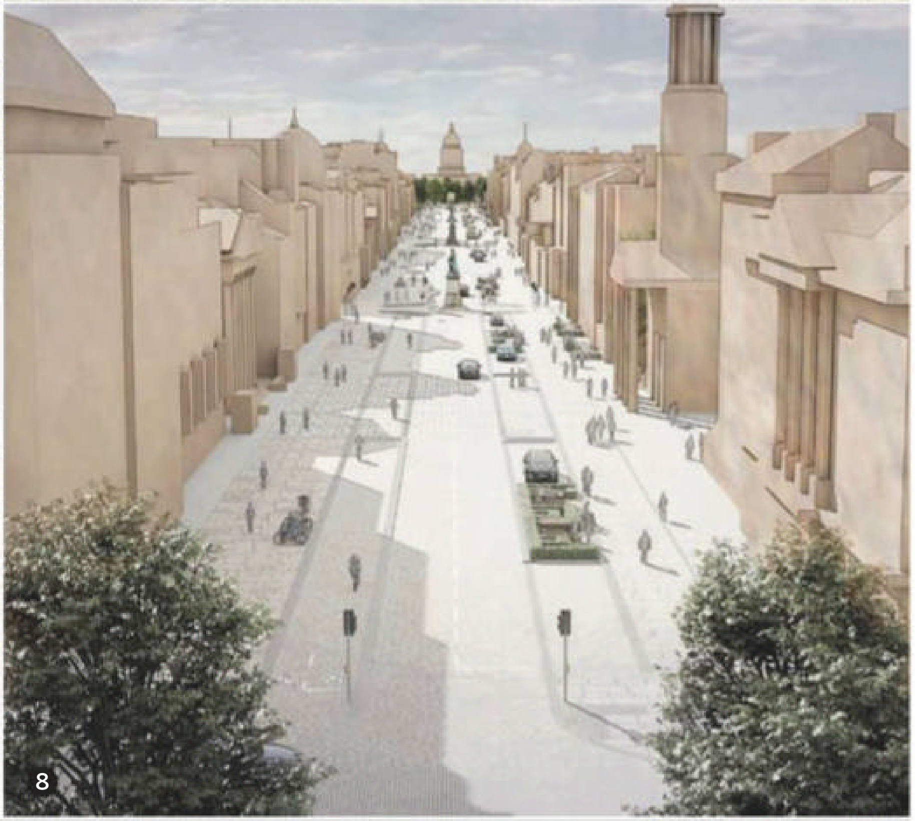
④ PAVILION DESIGN

A building inspired by Brazil's agricultural practice of direct planting over straw has been revealed as the country's pavilion for Expo 2020 Dubai. The design, by architect Gabriel Kozlowski and designer Gringo Cardia, is based on advances in sustainability. The pavilion produces its own energy, recycles its water and avoids the need for air conditioning through constant air flow and humidity provided by running water and vegetation. It also showcases the flexibility of laminated timber as a building material. Inside an exhibition Together for Nature is displayed on six walls, representing the six Brazilian biomes. **gabrielkozlowski.com**

RX ARCHITECTS







⑤ BROOKLYN PARK

Brooklyn Bridge Park, the 85-acre transformation of New York's East River waterfront has won the Award of Excellence in the General Design category of the American Society of Landscape. Designed by Michael Van Valkenburg Associates, the park features expansive lawns, waterfront promenades and playgrounds, and helps link adjacent neighbourhoods with green spaces that include several different habitats. The park also makes extensive use of salvaged materials, including stone from a dismantled city bridge for the Granite Prospect at Pier 1 and pine beams from building sites for bench slats. **brooklynbridgepark.org**

⑥ NEW BRIDGE

Specialist bridge designers Knight Architects has been given the go ahead to build a timber-clad foot bridge over the River Usk in south Wales. The bridge, which links Abergavenny with the village of Llanfoist, sits down river of the existing A4143 bridge. This Grade II*-listed stone bridge dates from medieval times and though reconstructed in the 19th century, is not wide enough to provide a comfortable crossing for pedestrians, cyclists and cars. The elegant new bridge will be 3m wide and 61m long, and clad in European larch, with a four-armed stainless steel pier and ramps that are parallel to the water flow. **knightarchitects.co.uk**

⑦ ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

The first phase of Matt Keightley's landscaping of the Royal Opera House is now complete. Matt's design forms part of the £50.7-million transformation of the historic building by Stanton Williams Architects, which includes a new theatre, bar, café, restaurant and extended terraces. Exotic planting now dominates the enclosed terrace on the opera house's fifth floor while multi-stemmed amelanchiers create seasonal interest on the open-air terracing. In the second phase the new glass auditorium will be dressed with dramatic palms, chosen for their bold foliage and textures. **rosebanklandscaping.co.uk**

⑧ GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH

A concept design for a greener George Street in Edinburgh has been revealed by Edinburgh City Council. The proposals, developed by LDA Design and consultants WYG, will transform one of Edinburgh's main shopping thoroughfares, into a safer and more attractive street for pedestrians and cyclists. The plan creates a more sociable space, with new plazas and seating, car-free areas, a two-way cycle path and clutter-free pavements. A selection of trees are being considered to help improve air quality. The scheme is part of a city-wide vision for long-term growth in the Scottish capital. **lda-design.co.uk, wyg.com**

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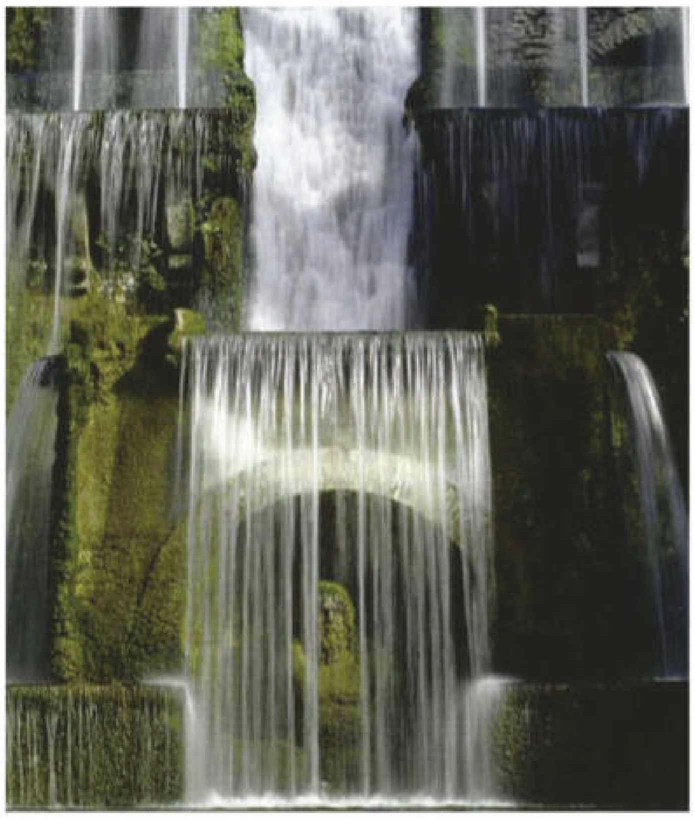

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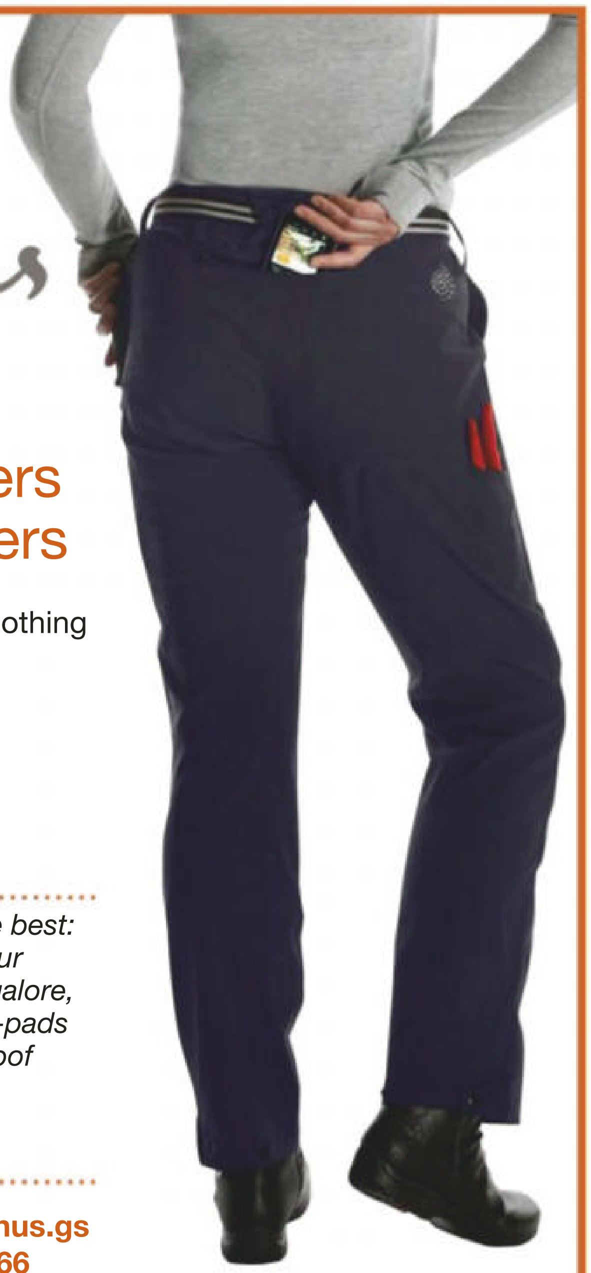

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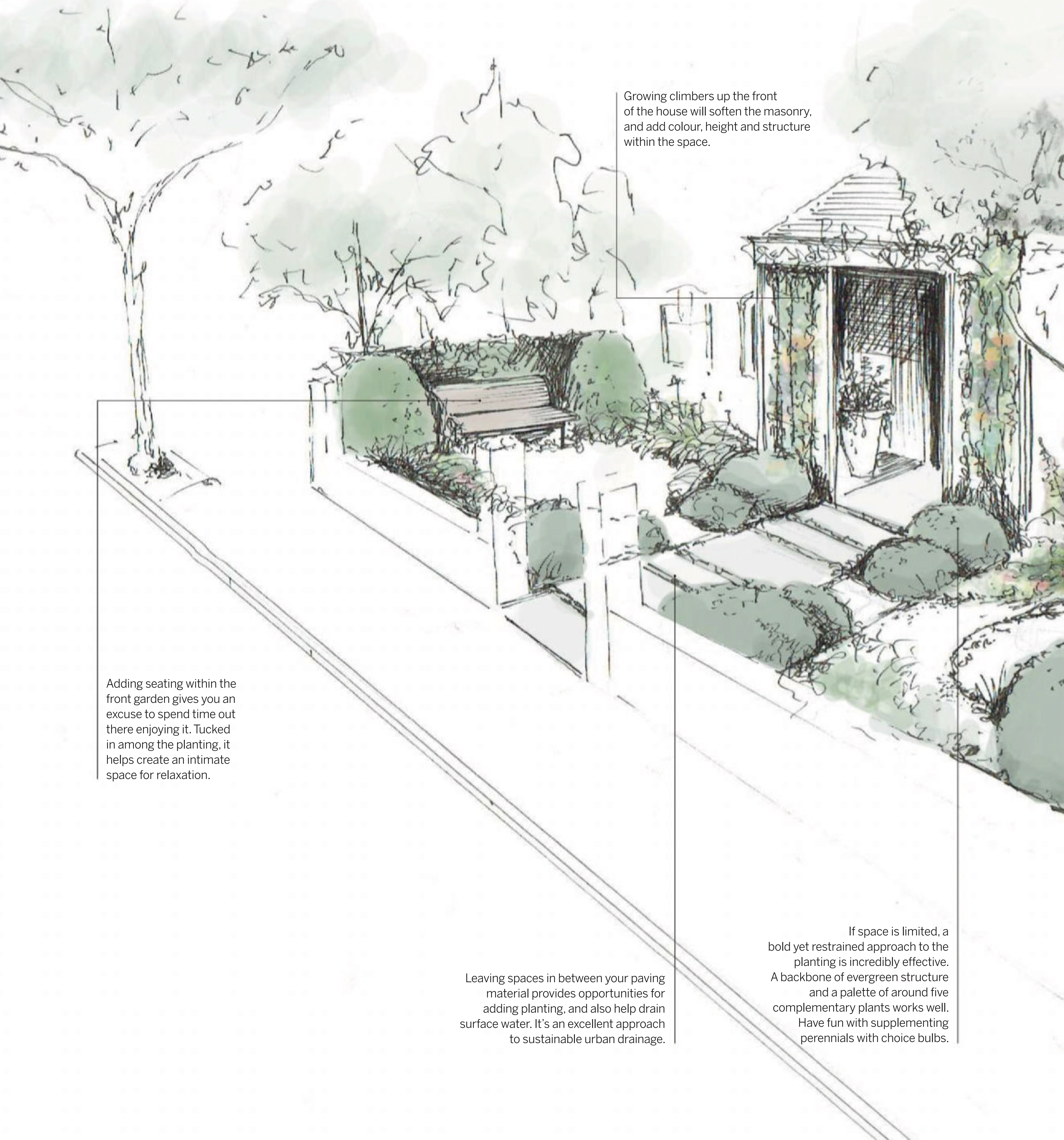
FRONT OF HOUSE

Your front garden is the one space you pass through every day, regardless of the weather or season. Designer Matt Keightley offers ideas on how to make best use of the space

WORDS AND ILLUSTRATION **MATT KEIGHTLEY**



Growing climbers up the front of the house will soften the masonry, and add colour, height and structure within the space.

Adding seating within the front garden gives you an excuse to spend time out there enjoying it. Tucked in among the planting, it helps create an intimate space for relaxation.

Leaving spaces in between your paving material provides opportunities for adding planting, and also help drain surface water. It's an excellent approach to sustainable urban drainage.

If space is limited, a bold yet restrained approach to the planting is incredibly effective. A backbone of evergreen structure and a palette of around five complementary plants works well. Have fun with supplementing perennials with choice bulbs.

Matt Keightley is an award-winning designer and two-time winner of the People's Choice Award at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. He is head designer at London-based landscaping firm Rosebank.

On the street in southwest London where I grew up everyone was on first-name terms with the postman and milkman, neighbours would smile at each other, and each afternoon, at the moment Concorde rumbled over the roof tops, people would step outside their homes to clap. I don't think it is any exaggeration to say that front gardens played a huge part in creating this sense of community. I can clearly remember seeing neighbours up and down the street out tending their front gardens; filling up bird feeders, lowering the deck on the mower in an attempt to achieve the perfect stripe, or attending to their annual display of flowers.

Over time, in similar streets across the UK, those striped lawns and flowers have gradually given way to paving and cars, but in recent years I've been encouraged to see a revival in the value people are placing on their front garden. I can't remember the last time I was explicitly asked by a client to create a rear garden without also considering the front. Clients in more rural areas have long thought about their plot as a whole, but now my city-based clients are also coming round to this way of thinking and putting more thought into planning at the front, which is excellent news.

PLANNING AND PLANTING

Broadly speaking, people often seem to fall into one of two camps when it comes to planting a front garden. They either create a scheme that complements the architectural style of their home and is sympathetic to the wider landscape; or they opt for a head-turning display of plants, trying to fit as many as possible into a small space.

I apply the same design principles to planning a front garden as I do for a rear garden. One of the main differences, apart from size and aspect, is the need to consider the relationship between planting and hard landscaping. In your front garden, hard landscaping, especially the architecture of your house, is more dominant. It's a good idea to soften any hard landscaping with plants, especially at the points where walls and paths meet.

> *VARYING LEVELS AND PERSPECTIVE CAN ADD BOTH STRUCTURE AND INTEREST TO A GARDEN*

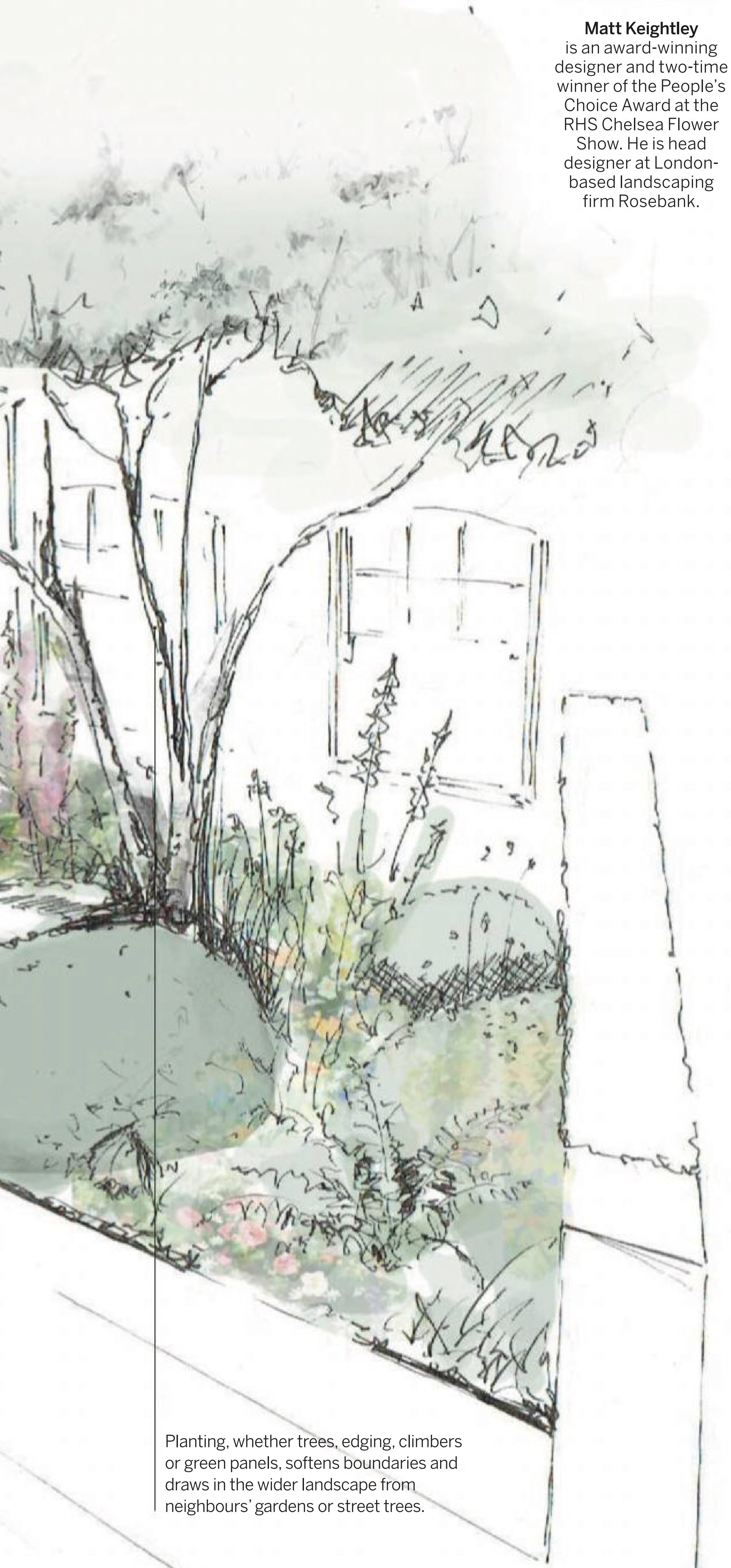
One obvious way to soften walls, and introduce planting where space is limited, is to use climbing plants. If positioned correctly, climbers will not only create the most romantic of entrances, but they can also hide a multitude of sins while working in harmony with striking features of your house's façade. Climbers, such as roses or clematis, offer height, colour and fragrance.

Trees can also help soften architecture, while also providing height and structure. They can have real impact and I love the instant transformation and seasonal interest they provide.

Groundcover planting is a great way to add colour and interest at the lowest levels around the garden and is useful for creating a breathing space between paving slabs in a path. This technique is very effective for mitigating rain water runoff providing sustainable urban drainage.

CHANGES IN LEVEL AND PERSPECTIVE

Varying levels and perspective can add structure and interest to a garden, creating a feeling of drama and excitement, which is vital when space is tight. Even if there are no physical changes in level in your garden you can create interest by layering planting. Varying the planting around a tree, for example achieves a ▷



Planting, whether trees, edging, climbers or green panels, softens boundaries and draws in the wider landscape from neighbours' gardens or street trees.

gradual change in height – from groundcover though perennial and evergreen structure, up through flower spikes into the canopy of the tree – of three metres in a area of little more than a square metre. And if you create a rhythm that allows eyes to drift effortlessly around the scheme you will make it an entrance visitors to your home will remember.

PRIVACY

The community spirit I loved as a child isn't for everyone. Many people want a bit more privacy in their front garden, especially if they're going to be using the space for entertaining. Softening boundaries with hedging or climbers, is an incredibly effective way of achieving both privacy and drawing in the wider landscape. By softening a boundary with planting, you avoid that abrupt full stop created by a fence or a wall and achieve a much greater sense of space. Your neighbours' trees start playing into your scheme, even street planting can help add a maturity and scale to your garden and you will soon feel enveloped by the landscape and secluded from your neighbours without the need to erect three-metre walls. You may wish to obscure views into your property and small medium trees work well, as long as your choice is carefully considered. I would always advise using a deciduous tree, to make sure you allow plenty of light into the house throughout autumn and winter when days are shorter and the sun is lower in the sky.

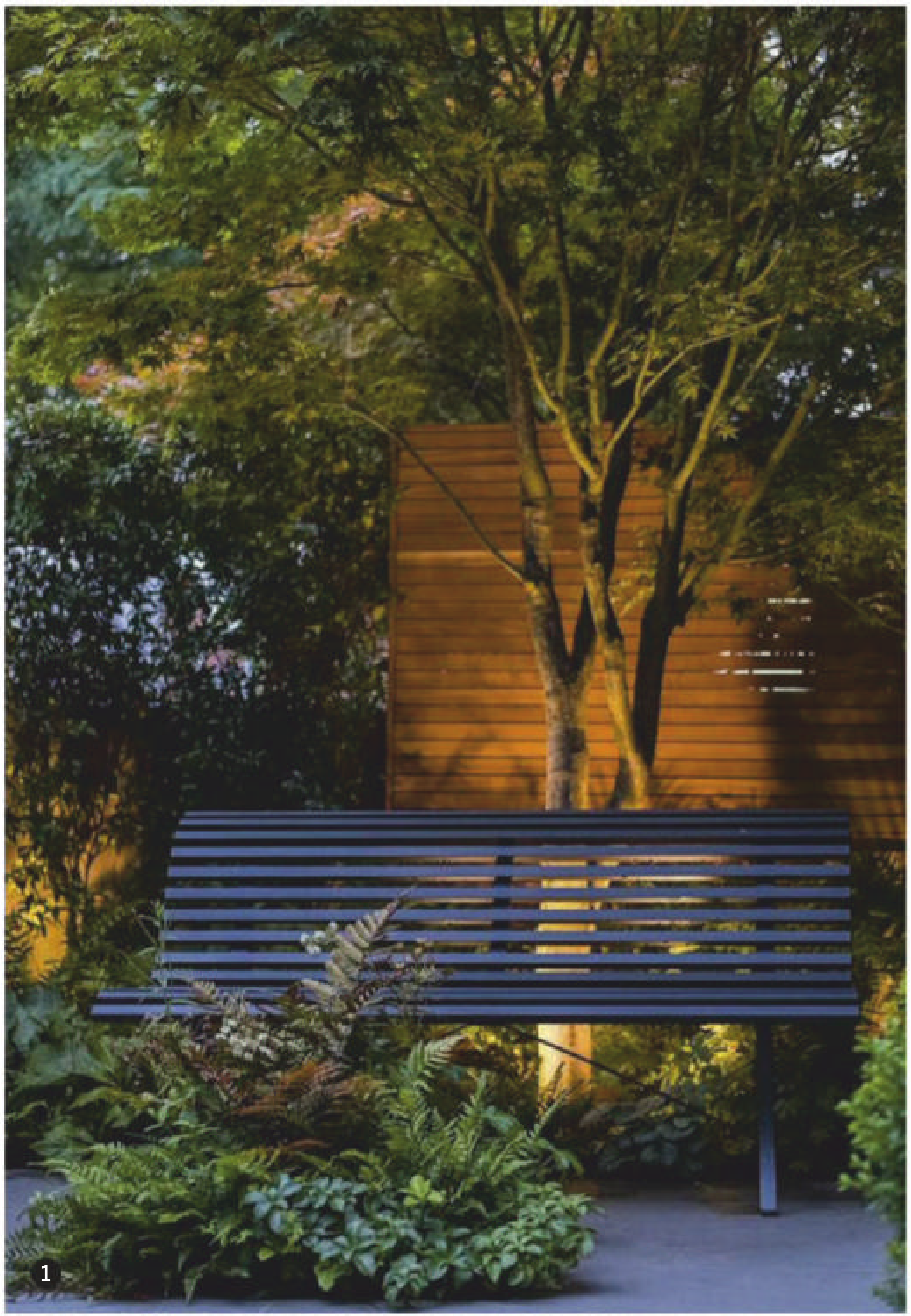
PLANTS OR PARKING?

For plant lovers it seems obvious to give priority to plants rather than cars. For many though the choice isn't as clear cut. As a father of two young daughters who lives on a relatively busy road with no street parking, I wrestled with this dilemma, but the five minutes it takes me to walk to my car draped with coats, toys, scooters and, more often than not, my younger daughter is worth it, to be greeted each morning with an ever-changing front garden filled with an eclectic mix of plants. There's no right or wrong answer. There are simple ways of combining a garden and parking to create a space that is both practical and aesthetically pleasing. But if you are going to include space for cars, do it responsibly and think about the permeability of any hard surfaces you lay. There are many permeable drive-over products available and you can also take the simple step of leaving spaces between paving slabs to avoid rainwater runoff. This will not only help reduce the risk of flooding, it will also allow you more space for plants.

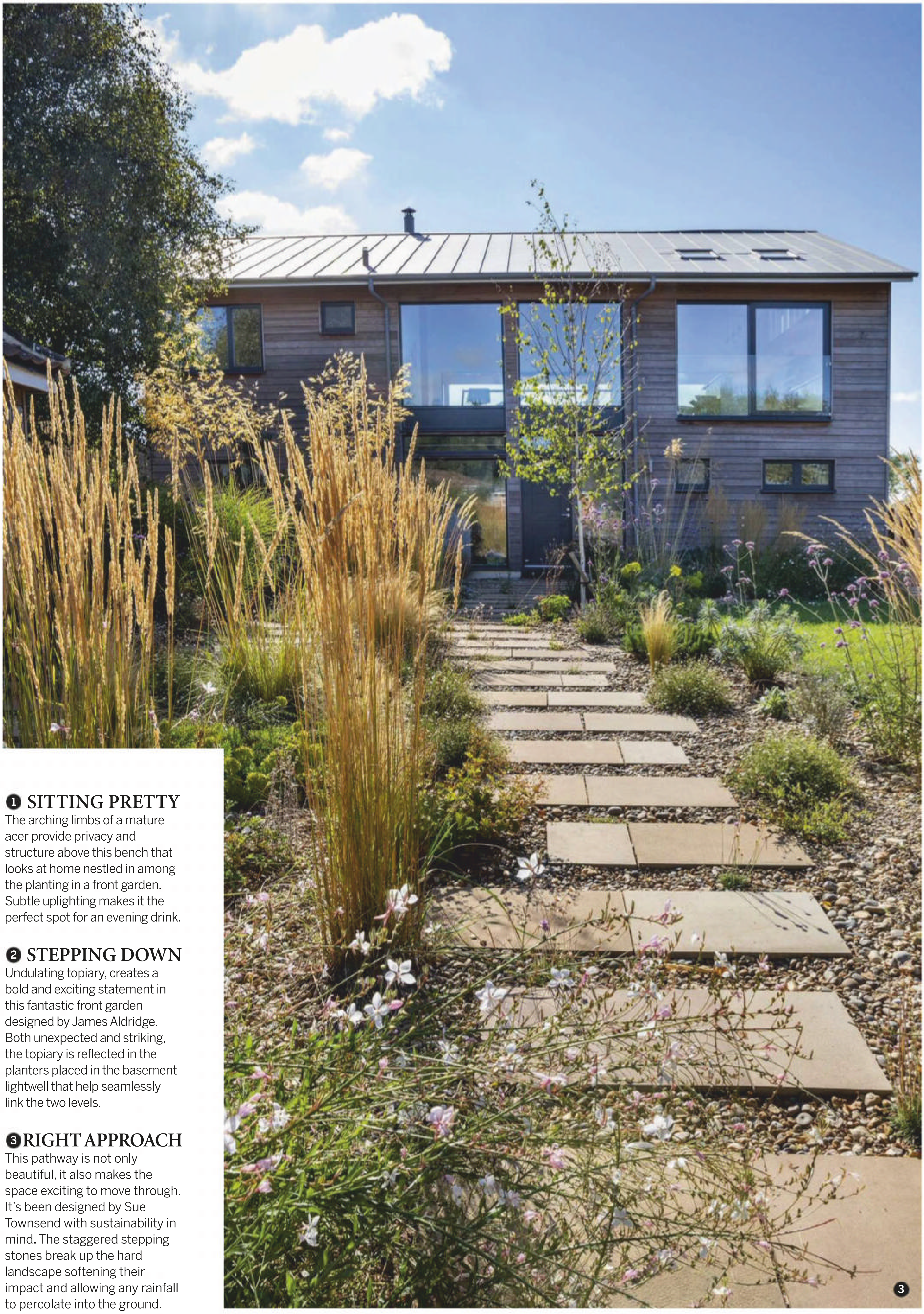
> *FOR PLANT LOVERS IT SEEMS OBVIOUS TO GIVE PRIORITY TO PLANTS RATHER THAN CARS*

SEATING AND ENTERTAINING

If your overall outdoor space is limited, it makes sense to make use of both your front and back gardens for seating and entertaining, especially if your back garden is in shade for much of the day. As a designer, I've been asked to include all manner of things in front gardens – from meditation spaces to barbecue areas – and I have a lot of respect for clients who want to make use of every inch of outdoor space. We need to stop thinking of our front gardens as simply a path from the front gate to the front door or somewhere to park the car. With a little planning and imagination your front garden can become an attractive and usable space that makes the journey from your front door each morning that little bit brighter. ☐



1 WILL NICHOLLS FILMS / MATT KEIGHTLEY; 2 MARIANNE MAJERUS, DESIGN: JAMES ALDRIDGE; 3 MARIANNE MAJERUS, DESIGN: SUE TOWNSEND



❶ SITTING PRETTY

The arching limbs of a mature acer provide privacy and structure above this bench that looks at home nestled in among the planting in a front garden. Subtle uplighting makes it the perfect spot for an evening drink.

❷ STEPPING DOWN

Undulating topiary, creates a bold and exciting statement in this fantastic front garden designed by James Aldridge. Both unexpected and striking, the topiary is reflected in the planters placed in the basement lightwell that help seamlessly link the two levels.

❸ RIGHT APPROACH

This pathway is not only beautiful, it also makes the space exciting to move through. It's been designed by Sue Townsend with sustainability in mind. The staggered stepping stones break up the hard landscape softening their impact and allowing any rainfall to percolate into the ground.

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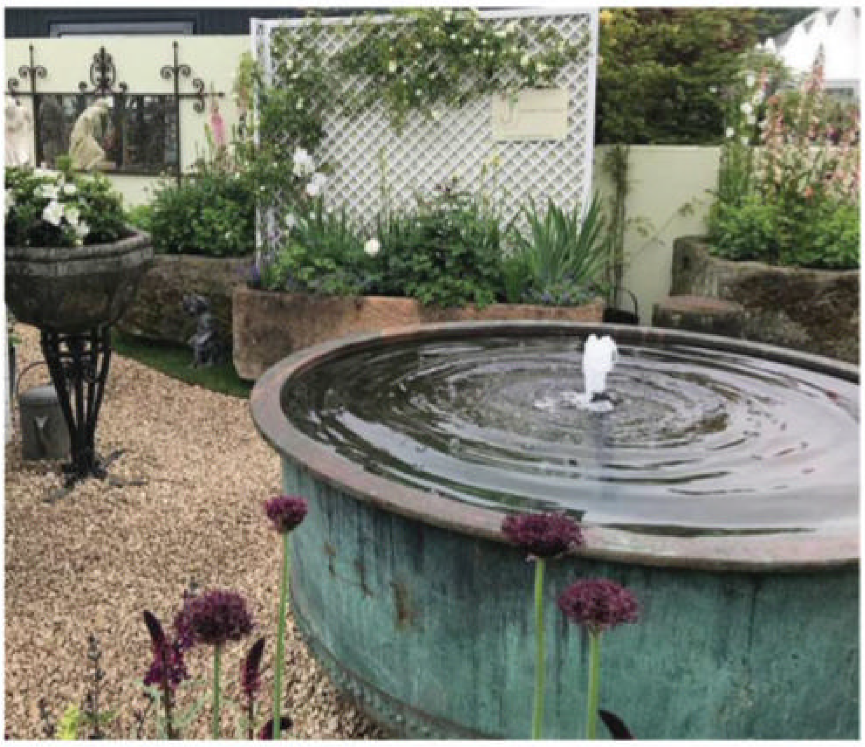

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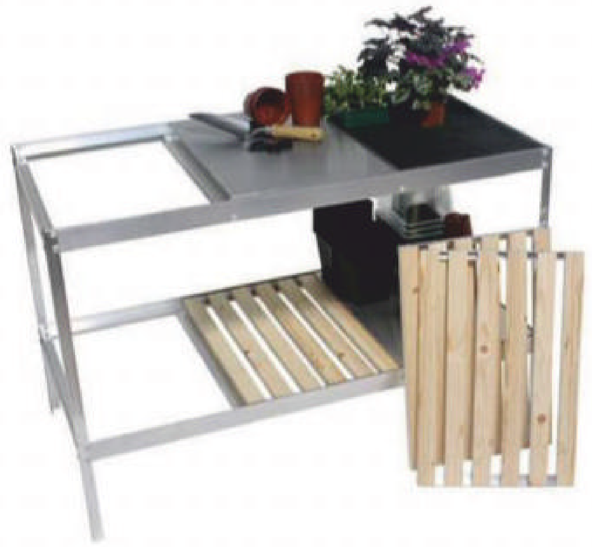

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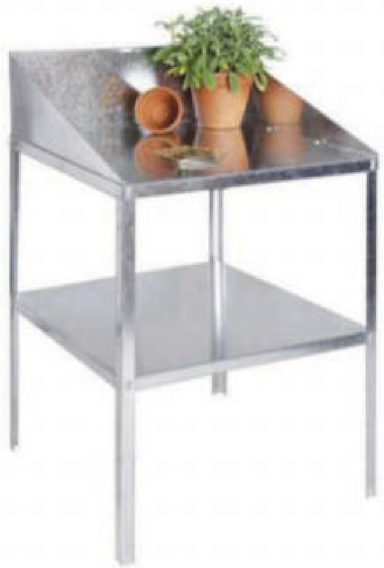

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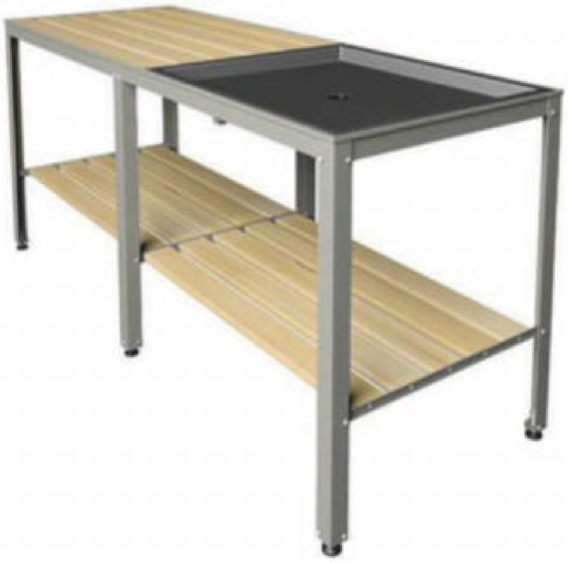

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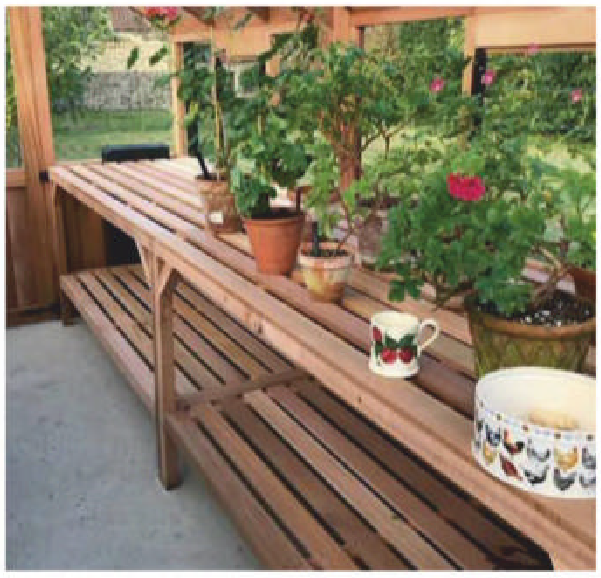

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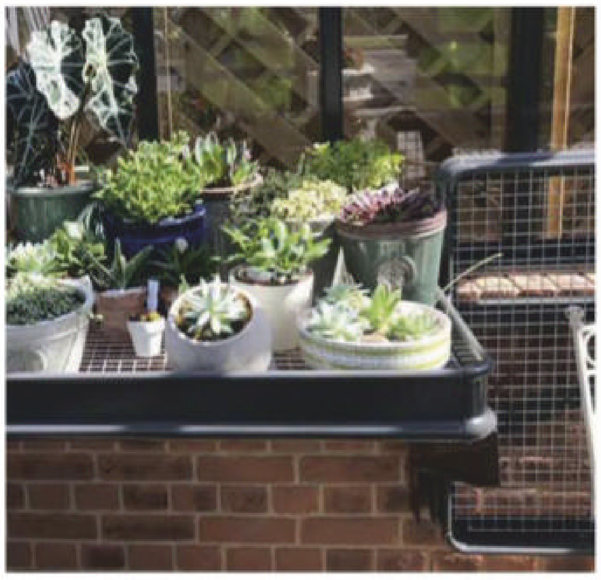

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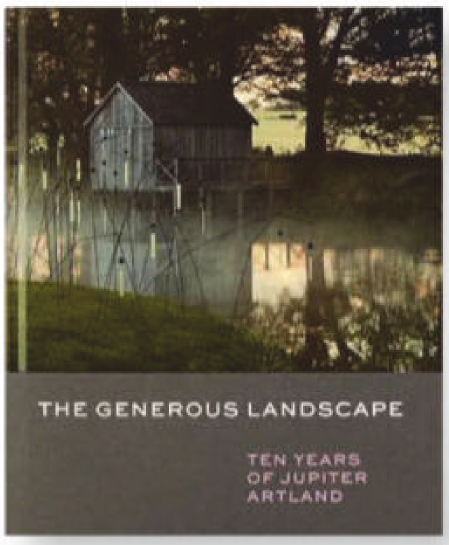
DOWNTOOLS

Book reviews, crossword, back issues, competition, reader offer

Discover more about the trees and forests of Europe and North America in *Forest: Walking Among Trees*, by Matt Collins, head gardener at the Garden Museum and photographer Roo Lewis, reviewed on page 104.

CLIMBING DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN IN SAXONY, CZECH REPUBLIC SIDE/ROO LEWIS

BOOK REVIEWS



THE GENEROUS LANDSCAPE; TEN YEARS OF JUPITER ARTLAND

Jupiter Artland
Foundation, £35
ISBN 978-0995783010

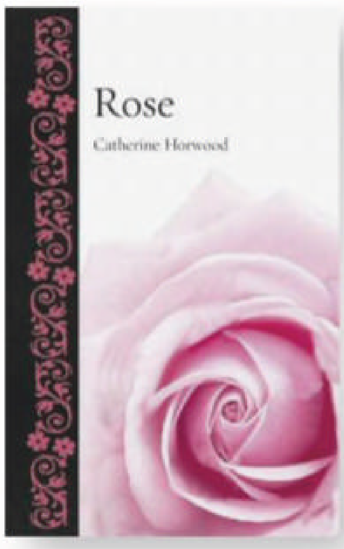
A celebration of the first ten years of the Scottish sculpture park Jupiter Artland, and its 36 permanent works by contemporary artists.

Reviewer Annie Gatti is a freelance garden writer.

As the title suggests, this large-format book chronicles the first ten years of the Scottish sculpture park surrounding Bonnington House, the Jacobean home to art patrons Nicky and Robert Wilson. It features an eclectic collection of 36 permanent works by contemporary artists and the 30-plus exhibitions and temporary pieces from the past ten years. But the book is more than a catalogue of this personal selection of artworks. Through essays, commentaries and the participating artists' own words it explores the ethos of this remarkable enterprise where artists are given the freedom to experiment and take risks, supported and encouraged by the Wilsons. This collaborative process has drawn many of the most important names in contemporary art, including Phyllida Barlow, Andy Goldsworthy, Antony Gormley, Charles Jencks, Anish Kapoor, Cornelia Parker and Marc Quinn, to create site-specific pieces here.

The permanent works vary in scale, from Jencks's vast landform at the entrance to the park and Quinn's 12m-high bouquet of orchids to Alec Finlay's cabinet of herbal remedies. Most relate to, or play with, the immediate or distant landscape and while there is no substitute for discovering each piece by a visit to the park, the luminous photographs, the majority taken by Allan Pollok-Morris, from different angles and in different seasons, evoke the power of these arresting pieces. When the photography also elucidates the text the result is revelatory.

The book ends with an essay on its educational programme which invites children and students to explore the artworks in an immersive way. It's a resounding endorsement of this remarkable sculpture park.



ROSE

by Catherine Horwood

Reaktion Books, £16
ISBN 978-1789140132

A clearly written, information-packed review of the historical, religious, cultural and artistic significance of the world's favourite flower.

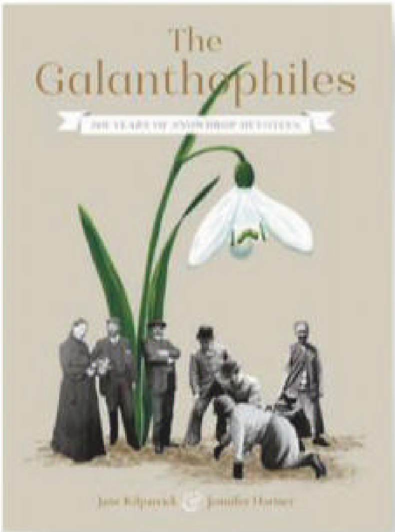
Reviewer John Hoyland is a plantsman and writer.

Catherine Horwood writes that before she started working on this book, she thought she knew something about roses but in writing it she discovered a great deal more. The same is true for the reader. You will pick up this book wondering what else there could possibly be to know about roses only to be captivated by a tapestry of deftly woven stories of the plants' botanic, literary, cultural and artistic influence that I, at least, discovered for the first time.

Like other books in this series, this is not a practical, how-to-grow-roses kind of book, although there is a short but intriguing recipe section (rose vodka, anyone?) and an appendix that succinctly explains the terminology of rose groups that are used in nursery catalogues. What you get instead is the significance of the rose in literature, from Sappho to Ali Smith, in opera, in dance, and in art and decoration. The book describes images of the rose from 13th-century stained glass windows to the photographic studies of Robert Mapplethorpe.

In a couple of fascinating chapters, Horwood traces the development of the rose as a garden plant from the end of the 18th century, a period she refers to as being the birth of the modern rose, to contemporary rose breeders. Along the way she sketches the stories of the personalities, from the Empress Josephine to David Austin, who have been influential in popularising roses and rose growing.

More than any other plant, roses are deeply embedded in European, Arabic and Asian religions and cultures and the book manages, in a succinct and engaging manner, to illuminate the breadth of the plant's influence. For gardeners who love roses this is a fascinating and enlightening book.


The Galanthophiles
160 YEARS OF SNOWDROP DEVOTEES
Jane Kilpatrick & Jennifer Harmer

THE GALANTHOPHILES : 160 YEARS OF SNOWDROP DEVOTEES

by Jane Kilpatrick and Jennifer Harmer

Orphons Publishing, £45
ISBN 978-1903360286

Comprehensively researched and illustrated history of our obsession with the white flowers that always seem so miraculous in winter.

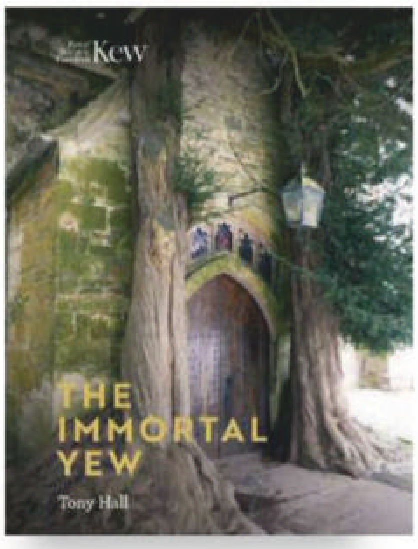
Reviewer Tim Richardson is a garden critic and regular columnist.

This extraordinary book chronicles the development of ‘snowdrop mania’ from 1854 to the present day. The authors state that our ‘native’ *Galanthus nivalis* probably arrived in Britain in the early 1500s, but the story of galanthophilia really begins in the 1860s, when Peter Barr began selling specimens of *G. plicatus* from his London nursery. The first bulbs of this species had apparently been sent back from the Crimea in 1855 by British soldiers, enchanted to find them sprouting up on the earthworks they’d been ordered to dig.

There follows a long and complex chronicle of the men and women who have been bewitched by these delicate flowers. We learn of the unlikely friendship between James Atkins and his neighbour the exuberant ex-Guardsman and big-game hunter Henry Elwes (of *G. elwesii* fame). There is James Allen, recipient in 1880 of one of only two bulbs of ultra-rare, green-petalled *G. nivalis* ‘Virescens’, who debunked the myth of pink snowdrops, supposedly found in a Norfolk garden, by stating that, ‘the young ladies of the house had played a joke on the gardener by watering a clump of snowdrops with a strong solution of cochineal’.

The Giant Snowdrop Company (1952-68) is credited with popularising the species through its catalogues and stands at Chelsea Flower Show, which Margery Fish said were, ‘surrounded all through the day, with the experts peering and comparing’. Latterly the rival ‘snowdrop lunches’ convened by Richard Nutt and Primrose Warburg became the invitations to seek out.

This is a first-class piece of research, well written and immaculately edited, and a fine illustration of the importance of the social background to so much horticultural history.



THE IMMORTAL YEW

by Tony Hall

Kew Publishing, £25
ISBN 978-1842466582

A passionate insight into the world of Britain’s beautiful and historic ancient yew trees, with profiles of more than 75 remarkable specimens.

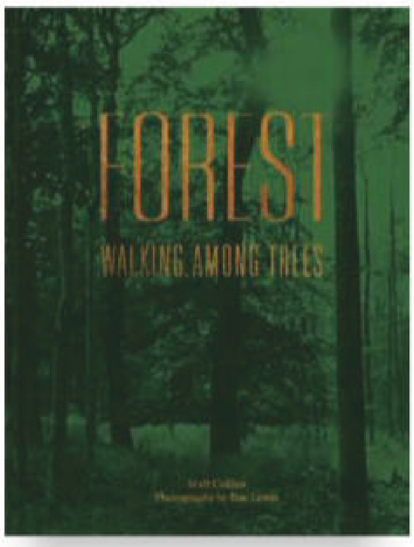
Reviewer Ambra Edwards is an author and garden historian.

At first sight, it seems a curious hobby, to travel all over the country, visiting individual ancient trees. But lingering over the photographs in this captivating book (all taken by the author), Tony Hall’s mission becomes entirely understandable. Every one of the noble yews recorded here is unique and special, embodying an extraordinary emotional power akin to a great work of art. Each is a witness to history; the oldest living things in the UK are yew trees.

The species, *Taxus baccata*, is at least 15 million years old. Some trees now living certainly pre-date the Christian churches where they are commonly found, and were probably planted on sites of Celtic or Druidic worship – their ability to regenerate making them potent symbols of eternity. Hall traces their religious, cultural and historical significance – the Druidic wands of yew that warded off evil spirits, the long-bows of yew that defeated the French at Agincourt, and in recent years, the use of yew as an anti-cancer drug.

Every tree tells a story. We meet the Ankerwycke Yew, already 1,700 years old when it presided over the signing of Magna Carta; the Pulpit Yew, once a platform for the preachings of John Wesley; and the magical yew-framed doorway of St Edward’s Church in Stow-on-the-Wold, which provided inspiration to Tolkien. Most mysterious of all is Scotland’s celebrated Fortingall Yew, reputedly 9,000 years old. This most ancient of trees appears to be changing gender: one small branch of this male tree has become female and started to produce berries.

I was delighted to find some of Hall’s subjects to be within visiting range. This beguiling book will be supplying many of us with an engrossing new hobby for years to come.



FOREST: WALKING AMONG TREES
by Matt Collins,
photography by Roo Lewis

Pavilion Books, £25
ISBN 978-1911595267

A refreshingly original journal documenting trees and forests, structured through a collection of personal essays and stories.

Reviewer Rosanna Morris is a freelance writer.

As author Matt Collins explains in his opening pages, this book 'is about the experience of trees; of meeting them in the field… up close.' Collins, a garden and nature writer as well as head gardener at the Garden Museum in London, along with photographer Roo Lewis, spent a year visiting trees and woods in Europe and North America to produce this book. They walk among towering poplars on a tree farm in Oregon; and clamber over gnarled oaks in an enchanted woodland on Dartmoor.

Ten types of common tree – pine, juniper, oak, hornbeam, cherry, beech, birch, chestnut, Douglas fir and poplar – make up the ten chapters. Each begins with a paragraph introducing the tree and a large image of a leaf – a helpful tool for those who struggle to identify species. The chapter is then divided into two parts: an account relating to that tree followed by a visit to a forest in which it grows.

There are large tracts of text but Collins is an adept storyteller and his descriptive prose takes you into the forest, walking behind him, whether stepping over fly agaric fungi in a fantastical valley in Saxony or watching wolves in a Douglas fir plantation in Shropshire, and he leaves a trail of interesting facts.

Lewis's photographs capture the other-worldly feel and mystery of these trees and forests. They have a soft focus and sepia tinge to them that is rich with nostalgia and atmosphere and evoke both fairy tale and fable.

Forest has a broad appeal. For those of the forest-bathing generation who long to get lost in nature, this is a book in which you can lose your way in the wilderness and come out more clued up on tree species.

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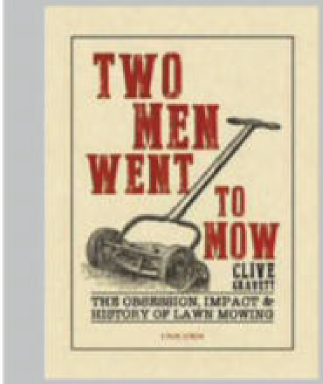

TWO MEN WENT TO MOW
by Clive Gravett
Unicorn Publishing, £14.99
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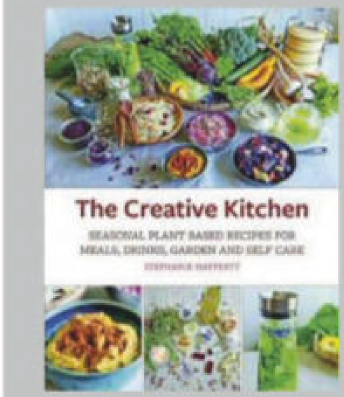
Enthusiast Clive Gravett tells the story of the invention of the lawn mower and how it changed the face of gardens and turf-based sports.



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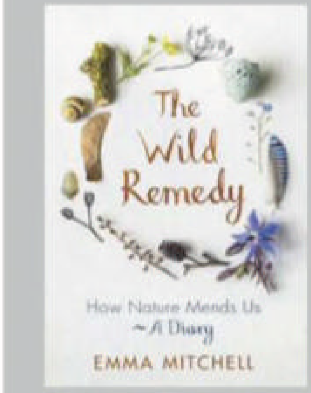

THE WILD REMEDY
by Emma Mitchell
Michael O'Mara Books Ltd, £14.99
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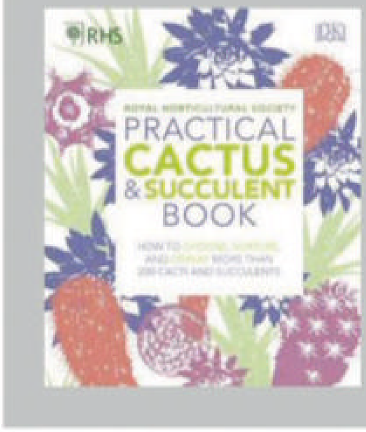
An illustrated account of how reconnecting with nature helped author Emma Mitchell combat her depression.



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EDUCATION GUIDE

Are you looking to change career, gain accreditation or simply learn more about your passion? Choose the best option for you from this selection of full-time, part-time and short courses.

LEARNING WITH EXPERTS

Study Design and Horticulture Online

Courses with the greatest experts in horticulture and design in the world, including Piet Oudolf, Dr Noel Kingsbury and someone from David Austin Roses.

Courses are all taken from the comfort of your own home and all online. Whether you want to change career, or are an enthusiast who wants to learn from the best you can get qualified, or simply learn from a trusted expert.

Learning with Experts is RHS distance learning approved provider 2018 where you can study RHS Level 2, and has its online garden design diploma, which is rapidly becoming the go-to place to study if you want to qualify as a garden designer.

Learning with experts
Gardening

07884 267306
info@learningwithexperts.com
learningwithexperts.com

OPEN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Garden design is not just a career path, it's an art form. At the Open College of the Arts, our BA Garden Design degree will help you to understand the 'academic skills' of garden landscaping, we'll progress your professional skills to help you to establish your own career, and above all, we'll facilitate the development of your artistic style.

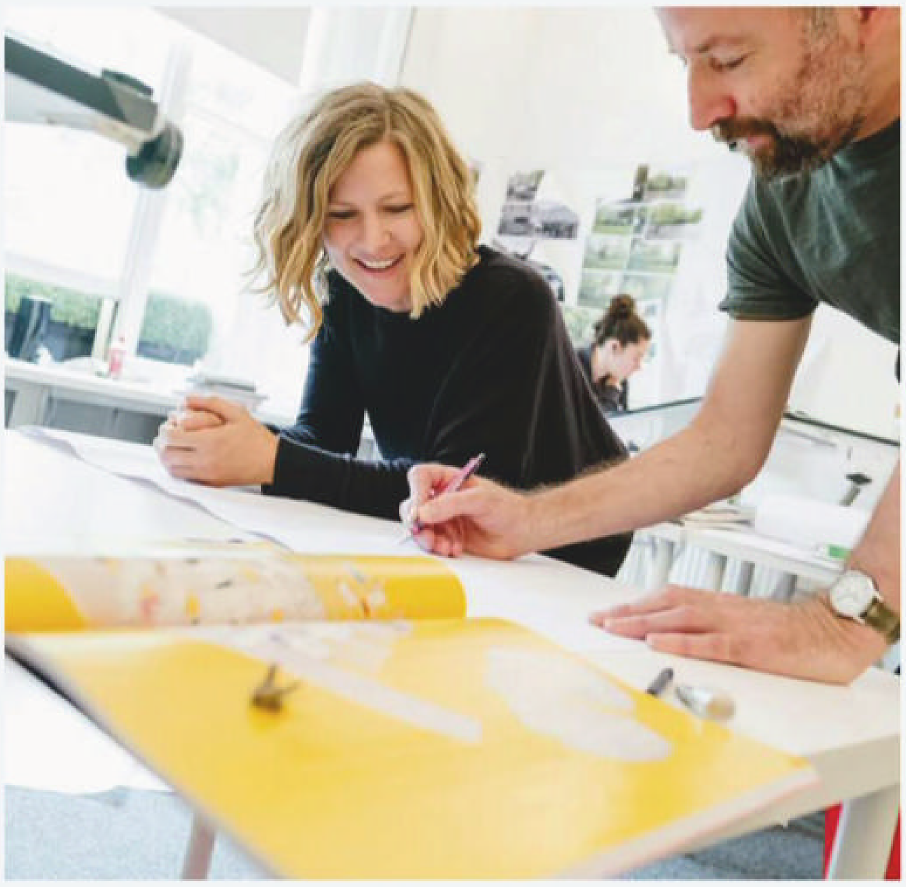
The course covers the research behind garden design, such as sourcing materials, evaluating sources and correct citing. You'll build on your plant knowledge, their ecological requirements and the design relevance they hold.

We'll help you to build a technical ability that will call on elements of graphic design, presentation skills and 2D and 3D drafting. Making sure you can vocalise your ideas and present them to full effect.

The Open College of the Arts is a distance learning institution, giving you access to study the arts at any point in your career from any location. As a member of our global community, you'll have flexible timeframes with one-to-one tutor support.

Open
College
of the Arts

0800 731 2116
enquiries@oca.ac.uk
oca.ac.uk



INCHBALD SCHOOL OF DESIGN

The Inchbald School of Garden Design is an established independent school that offers online and in-house courses ranging from Master of Arts programmes to short introductory courses.

The Inchbald pioneered garden design training in the UK, providing courses that focused on garden design for the domestic environment. This remains its speciality, but it has expanded and refined its garden design courses to accommodate the increased demand for professionalism. With its global reputation for excellence and decades of experience, studying with Inchbald enables students to hone their talent and bring out their individual attitude to design, setting them firmly on the path to success.

The School has a long-established reputation for serious, practical training that is designed to prepare our graduates to enter the design professions and counts among its alumni some of the most respected garden designers in the world. We continue to pride ourselves on the success of our students in the marketplace. The school maintains strong connections with the garden design profession enabling us to place students with established designers, many of whom were Inchbald graduates themselves.

A high standard of teaching is central to our garden design school's success and on which our reputation has been built over the past 40 years. Whether it's a full time, part time or online course you will receive guidance from the same high-quality tutors. So if you are aiming for a successful career in garden design or simply looking to improve your own garden you won't find a better established or more renowned school than the Inchbald.

inchbald.co.uk
32 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PB
020 7630 9011
gardens@inchbald.co.uk

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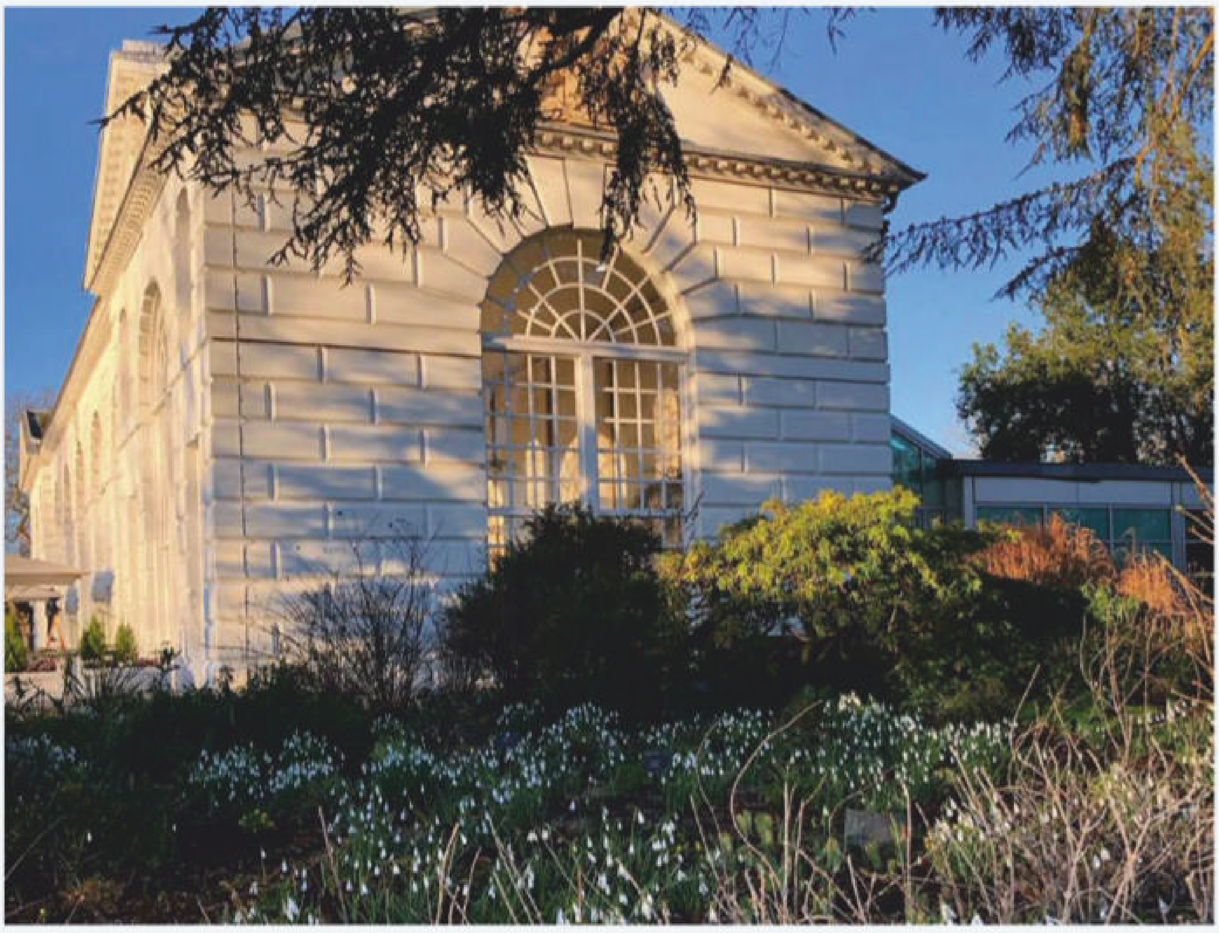
SGD SOCIETY OF GARDEN DESIGNERS
EDUCATOR

THE LONDON COLLEGE OF GARDEN DESIGN



Inspiring courses for the garden professional

Inspirational training in the heart of London

Are you looking for world-class, inspirational training to develop a career in garden design? Our one-year Garden Design Diploma led by Andrew Wilson is firmly established as one of the leading qualifications in the UK. With students coming from across Europe, we pride ourselves on offering an exciting and often demanding environment that teaches not just the fundamentals of design but also develops skills in construction design and running your own successful garden design studio.

Classes take place at the world famous Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in the Orangery Conference Centre. All our expert tutors are practicing professionals and we ensure that our students get the opportunity to take part in inspirational visits and free graduate seminars.

Great opportunities

Our students have won the majority of Society of Garden Designers Student Awards over the past 7 years and regularly graduate to work for some of the world's leading designers. Other opportunities include assisting top designers at Chelsea and other shows and we also offer graduate competitions giving you the chance to design gardens in prestigious locations.

Our Planting Design Diploma

Our six-month intensive Planting Design Diploma is for those who already have some experience in landscape architecture, horticulture or gardening and who want to extend their skills in this important aspect of garden design.

Led by Andrew Fisher Tomlin, a Chartered Horticulturist and winner of RHS Best in Show awards, the course supports your passion for planting design with some of the UK's leading planting specialists, including Neil Lucas, Carolyn Willitts, Tony Kirkham, Nigel Dunnett, Jo Thompson, Kate Gould, Helen Basson and James Basson.

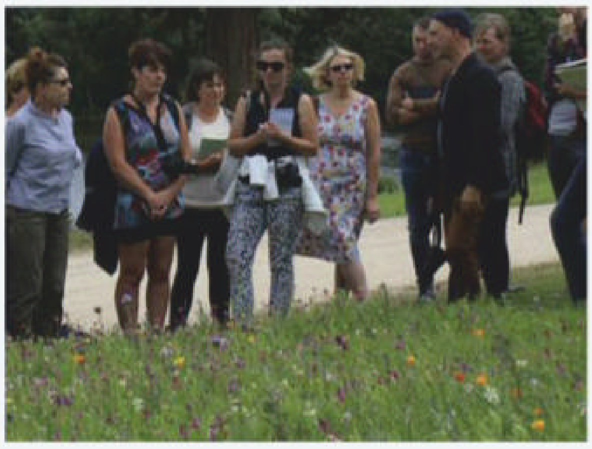
Continuing Professional Development

Every designer needs to keep up with current trends and especially new materials and methods. Our Info Burst seasons bring together experts from across the design, landscaping and plant worlds. Based at Regent's University in central London, the seminars are held in the evening and offer bite-sized bursts of information to help you keep up to date.

We also offer short courses in conjunction with the Royal Horticultural Society at RHS Garden Wisley and in collaboration with RBG Kew at our home in Kew Gardens. Each course concentrates on a specific element of garden design and is suitable for both professionals and the amateur enthusiast.

01483 762955
lcgd.org.uk
info@lcgd.org.uk

LC GD LONDON COLLEGE OF GARDEN DESIGN



GARDEN MASTERCLASS

Curated by garden designer Annie Guilfoyle and horticulturalist Noel Kingsbury, Garden Masterclass is a place where gardeners, designers and landscape architects come together to learn and share their experience and knowledge. The list of tutors includes some of the most innovative people in the gardening world and these exceptional one-day workshops are held all over the British Isles and continental Europe.

Tutors include: *Liz Ackerley; Nick Bailey; James & Helen Basson; Bob Brown; Tom Brown; Hugo Bugg & Charlotte Harris; Marina Christopher; Mark Diacono; Nigel Dunnett; Elliott Forsyth; Olivier Filippi; Fergus Garrett; Annie Guilfoyle; Giacomo Guzzon; Rosy Hardy; Jason Ingram; Noel Kingsbury; Lia Leendertz; Neil Lucas; Michael Marriott; Ton Muller; Sean Murray; Dan Pearson; Joshua Sparkes; Andi Strachan; Rachel Siegfried; Troy Scott-Smith; Andy Sturgeon; Sarah Wain; Timothy Walker.*

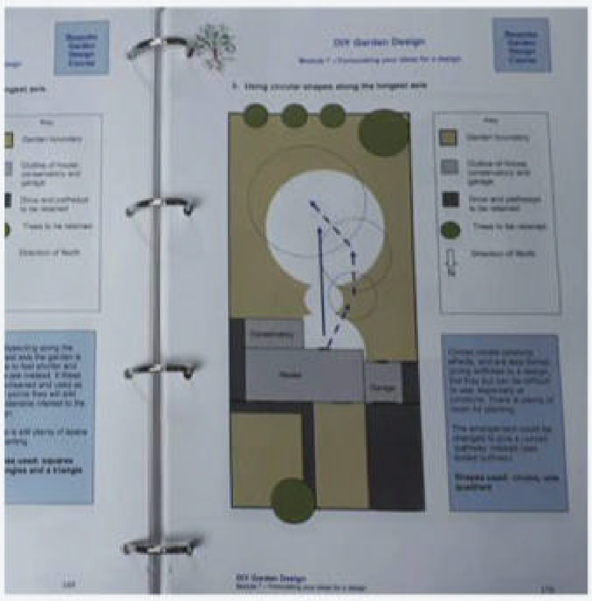
Venues include: *Adderstone House (Northumbria); Alitex (Hants); Arvensis Perennials (Wilts); Beningborough Hall (Yorks); Borde Hill (M. Sussex); Bury Court (Hants); Chatsworth (Derbys); The Coach House (Glos); East Ruston Old Vicarage (Norfolk); Forde Abbey (Som); Green and Gorgeous (Oxon); Hillside (Som); Horniman Museum (London); Hospitalfield (Angus); Iford Manor (Wilts); Pépinière Filippi (S.France); Parham House (W. Sussex); Scampston Walled Garden (Yorks); Sheffield Botanical Garden (S.Yorks); Stillingfleet Lodge Garden (Yorks); Thenford (Northhants); Trentham Estate Gardens (Staffs); Whitburgh House (Midlothian); Yeo Valley Organic Garden (Som).*

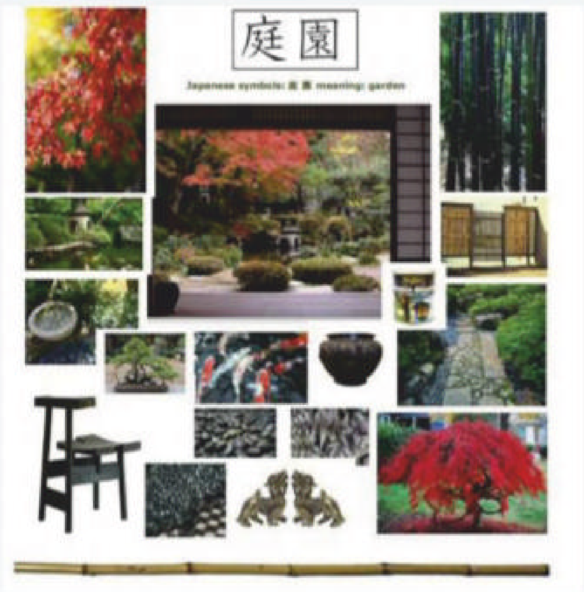
Garden Masterclass

IN ASSOCIATION WITH GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

SUPPORTED BY ALITEX GREENHOUSES AND CONSERVATORIES

gardenmasterclass.org
gardenmasterclass@gmail.com




庭園
Japanese symbols: 庭 園 meaning: garden

BEST IN HORTICULTURE GROUP

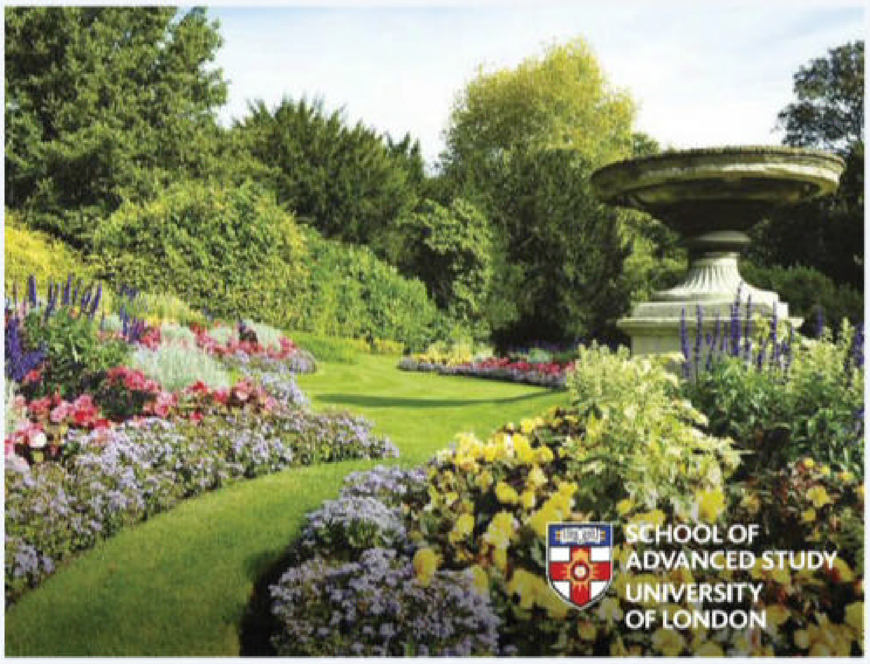
Flexible routes to study RHS practical and theory courses, organic horticulture and garden design.

- BEST in Horticulture provides online and correspondence options for you to study at home.
- The Academy of Practical Horticulture gives you the chance to learn from experts at our Centres at Ryton Organic Gardens, Bampton and North Moreton.

You don't need horticulture or design experience to study our Practical Garden Design course at Ryton; in 13 sessions, spaced through the year, you learn the processes that underpin good garden design and how to implement them in a practical way to produce a high quality professional hand-drawn design (master plan), planting plans, construction drawings and a specification.

You need commitment to get the most from your tuition, by continuing your work between the sessions. An optional second year gives you tutor support while you develop a design of your own choosing. Students receive a copy of our 400pp colour handbook Practical Garden Design, written specifically to support this course.

enquiries@bestinhorticulture.co.uk
07498 918588
bestinhorticulture.co.uk



MA GARDEN & LANDSCAPE HISTORY

Learn about garden making over time and in different countries in this unique master's programme that brings together history, horticulture, architecture, and archaeology. The programme emphasises design, management, ownership, and the cultural contexts of gardens and landscapes.

- One year programme
- Full or part time
- Funding available
- Support for mature and returning students
- Widely respected University of London Master of Arts (MA) degree

sas.ac.uk/study/gardenhistory | 020 7862 8835

PLANTSNAP

Instantly identify plants of all kinds: flowers, trees, weeds, succulents, mushrooms, cacti and more! PlantSnap is the revolutionary plant identification app from Earth.com built to help you instantly identify plants in a snap. PlantSnap now works in every country on Earth and is translated into 36 languages! Our algorithm recognizes roughly 90% of all known species on the planet, with over 585,000 species in our searchable database. Download today!

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The
ENGLISH GARDENING SCHOOL
— *CHELSEA* —

GARDENING FOR BEGINNERS

Wednesday & Thursday 24/25 April and 1/2 May ***BOOKING NOW***

One of our most popular courses, now led by master horticulturalist Ben Pope, which aims to take each student through all the practical elements of caring for a garden from soil, tools, maintenance, seed sowing and propagating, weed control and pests and diseases. The first three days will be spent at the Chelsea Physic Garden and the final day will be spent gaining practical experience in Rosemary Alexander's much praised garden near Petersfield and the garden nearby, where Ben is in charge. Participants will be given a chance to prune, plant, sow seeds and regular maintenance tasks will be discussed. A light lunch and refreshments will be provided daily.

ONE YEAR GOOD GARDENING DIPLOMA

September 2019 – early July 2020

Covers the best in planting design while training in the more serious aspects of horticultural techniques. Practical sessions held at an exclusive garden under the guidance of an esteemed head gardener and lectures by many leading gardening personalities. Regular visits to outstanding private gardens.

(1 day a week (Tues), 10.30am–3.15pm, over three 10 week terms)

THE ESSENTIAL GARDEN DESIGN DIPLOMA

January – March 2020

Based at the Chelsea Physic Garden and led by Rosemary Alexander. This course covers all the elements needed to design an average garden. Taking students step by step through site surveying, using the grid, horizontal and vertical features, garden layout and planting plans, costing and specification, plus tuition and homework on design and planting portfolios. Tutors are well respected in the industry and will guide students through making a success of this diverse profession.

(2 days a week (Wed & Thu), 10.30am–3.15pm, plus 2 days homework)

GARDEN DESIGN & CARING FOR YOUR GARDEN

Distance Learning Courses study anytime, anywhere in the world

A stepping stone to a new career. These two courses are a step by step guide to either designing your own garden or learning how to plant and maintain an existing garden: drawing up plans, hard landscaping, site analysis, planting, month by month tasks etc. Taught through a comprehensive course book, with projects submitted by post.

(1-3 years to complete and individual assessment)

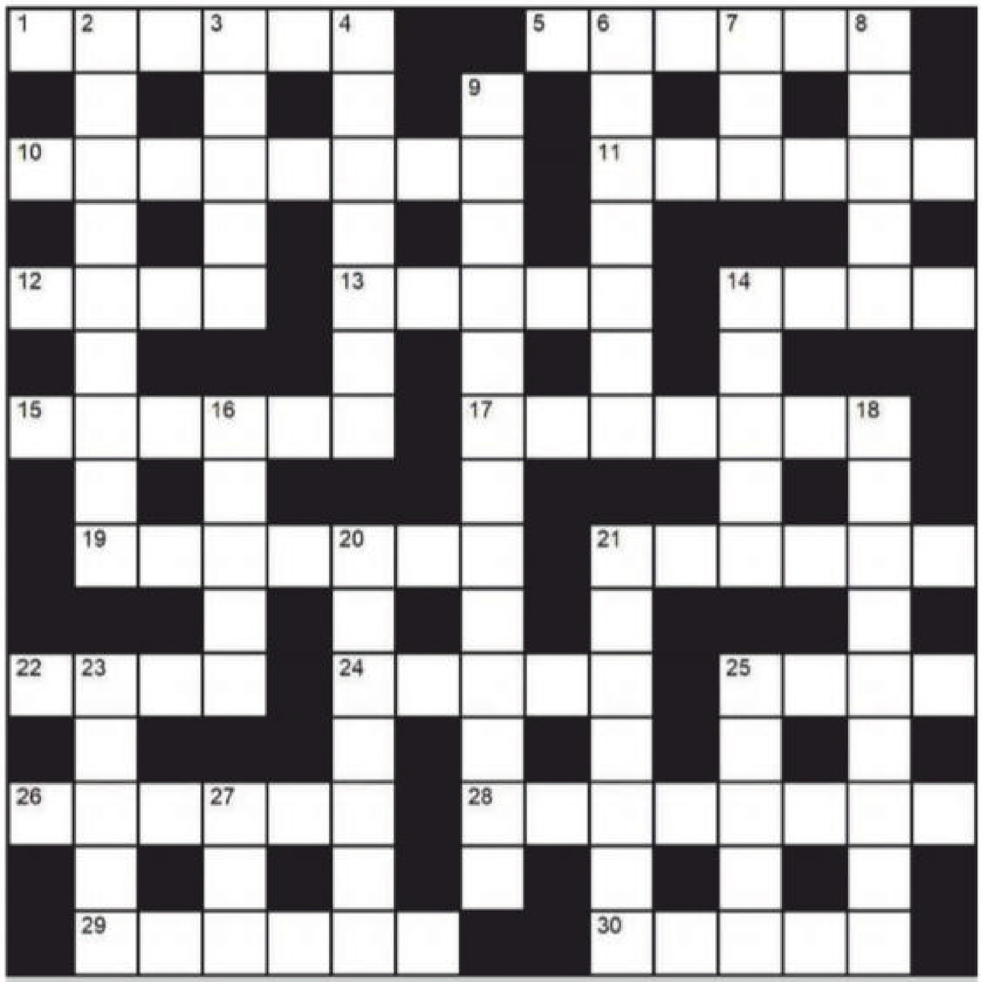
Garden of Medicinal Plants – Chelsea Physic Garden Photo: R Alexander

Not sure which Diploma course is for you? Come along to an information session to see our location and find out more.

www.englishgardeningschool.co.uk
Email: info@englishgardeningschool.co.uk
Tel: 020 7352 4347

Long established as the leader in all design and gardening tuition and based at the unique and historic Chelsea Physic Garden

Crossword



ACROSS

1 Genus of wild ginger plant, with anagrammatical relative Saruma! (6)
5 Cover celery stalks to turn them white (6)
10 Plant commonly called all-heal – swimming in larvae (8)
11 Genus of eg the Turk's-cap plant (6)
12 Sumac plant – part of conifer husbandry (4)
13 *Liriodendron* is the genus of the ___ tree (5)
14 Cook… a bit of orache flower (4)
15/27 down Fled outside broken bower to see garden plot (6,3)
17 A white-based, pink-topped radish cultivar – or carrot-top? (3,4)
19 Genus of astilbe-like plant aka goat's beard (7)
21 Common name for fragrant *Acacia dealbata* (6)
22 Two admit sheltering plant producing blue dye (4)
24 Reaps wild bit of asparagus (5)
25 See 8 down
26 Pointedly make holes for seeds? (6)
28 Coppery-orange double-flowered primula; also aromatic spice (8)
29 Salad plant is hard, sadly (6)
30 Genus of yellow-flowering shrubs – found in Gaza, rampant

DOWN

2 Genus of plants, aka bladdernut – spathe lay twisted (9)
3 Grass-like plants in Poaceae family – partly freed soil (5)
4 More damp – it's more muddied! (7)
6 Aquatic plant leaf – oddly pallid around end of May (4,3)
7 A Morning Glory (*Ipomoea*) species – means nothing! (3)
8/25 across A *Sempervivum* plant makes dwelling keel over (5,4)
9 Flower cluster's nice close fern production (13)
14 Colour of sweet pea 'Juliet' – best of the bunch (5)
16 Injury eg from pruning (5)
18 A white double snowdrop – killed by Othello (9)
20 Plants commonly called Mexican asters – so's mace, oddly (7)
21 Genus of the prayer plant – wild amaranth with end removed (7)
23 Willow I included in rose arrangement (5)
25 Tropical climbing plant hidden by browallia, naturally (5)
27 See 15 across

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

SOLUTIONS TO JANUARY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1 Aspera **4** Lattice **9** Statue **10** Rhodiola **11** Arch **12** Pippa **13** Kent **14** Ostrya **16** Hesperis **18** Arboreta **20** Chives **22** Cane **23** Veins **24** Hips **26** Upright **27** Shiraz **28** Papaver **29** Magnet.

DOWN 2/25 Pitcher plant **3** Rue **5** Aloha **6** Twinkle **7** Celandine **8** Grape hyacinth **12** Peace **15** Serratula **17** Sacks **19** Olearia **21** Ipheion **23** Vogue **27/1** Sea aster.

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READER COMPETITION

Win a set of PowerGear™ X tools from Fiskars

PowerGear™ X Lopper.

FISKARS Xact

Xact™ Weed Puller.

There's nothing better than being able to unwind in your garden, and now, thanks to Fiskars, you can win a gardening bundle to help you do just that.

Fiskars can help you prepare for spring by ensuring you have the right tools for the job with its technologically smart range. With these to hand, you can have '0% stress and 100% happiness' while in your garden.

From the PowerGear™ X Pruner and Lopper, both of which are designed with a unique PowerGear™ mechanism that triples the cutting power of every cut, to the Xact™ Weed Puller, the Fiskars ultimate gardening bundle has everything you need to keep garden growth in check and make regular maintenance easy.

THE PRIZE

We have five state-of-the-art Fiskars packages to give away, worth over £169 each.

Each package consist of

- Solid™ Leaf Rake (M)
- PowerGear™ X Pruner (L) Anvil
- PowerGear™ X Lopper (M)
- Xact™ Weed Puller

All these tools give you outstanding results with little effort.

For more information on these tools and the whole of the Fiskars range go to **fiskars.co.uk**

FISKARS®

HOW TO ENTER

For your chance to win, answer the following question:

How much does the unique PowerGear™ mechanism increase cutting power by?
a) x 2 **b)** x 3 **c)** x 4

Enter by post

Send your answer on a postcard along with your name, address and contact details to *Gardens Illustrated* 270/Fiskars, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA.

Enter online

Visit gardensillustrated.com

Closing date for entries 1 March 2019

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1 Promoter: Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited. **2** Entrants must be UK residents aged 18 years or older, excluding the Promoter's employees. **3** By entering, you agree to be bound by all the rules of the promotion. **4** Only one entry per person allowed. **5** No responsibility accepted for lost, delayed, ineligible or fraudulent entries. **6** Closing date for entries is noon on 1 March 2019. **7** Winning entries will be chosen at random from all eligible entries. **8** The winners will be notified within a week of the close of the promotion by email. If a winner cannot be contacted, or fails to respond within ten days of such notification being sent, the Promoter reserves the right to offer the prize to a runner up. **9** The draw is final and no correspondence will be entered into. **10** Promoter reserves the right to substitute the prize with one of the same or greater value but there is no cash alternative. **11** *Gardens Ilustrated* (published by Immediate Media Company Ltd) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers, and other promotions. If you would like to receive these please write 'YES GI INFO' on your postal entry. You may unsubscribe from these at any time. Details of how we hold your data can be viewed in our privacy policy at policies.immediate.co.uk/privacy.

READER OFFERS

15% off plants, bulbs and seeds at crocus.co.uk

February is a key month in getting your plant ordering sorted, ready for spring. And there's no shortage of plant inspiration in this issue with award-winning designer Ulf Nordfjell's pick of 100 must-have plants. From ferns to foliage favourites, shrubs and summer perennials, there's plenty to choose from. Let this be the start to making some interesting choices for the gardening year ahead.

Online nursery crocus.co.uk offers a great range of plants for home delivery – plus this month readers can claim 15 per cent off their plant orders. The offer applies across Crocus's range of plants, bulbs and seeds, giving you access to more than 4,000 plant varieties.

HOW TO ORDER

Go to **crocus.co.uk** to make your selection of plants, bulbs and seeds. To receive your discount, enter the code GI19 when prompted. Your 15 per cent discount will be applied at the checkout stage.

DELIVERY

Standard delivery charge is £4.99 (£2.99 if you are only ordering bulbs, £1 if you are only ordering seeds). Delivery to mainland UK addresses only. Please check **crocus.co.uk/delivery-information/** for full details on delivery areas.

Offer ends 28 February 2019 – subject to availability.

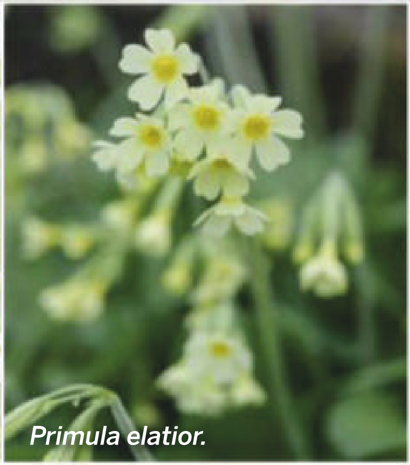
PLEASE NOTE

Offer valid for plants, bulbs and seed only featured on crocus.co.uk. All plants are subject to availability. Offer excludes products and machinery as well as gift vouchers and delivery. Discount cannot be used with any other offer. Code can only be used once per customer. While Crocus stocks a large range of plants, it doesn't necessarily stock all 100 of Ulf Nordfjell's selection. To find suppliers of specific cultivars, please use the RHS Plant Finder book or **rhs.org.uk/plants/search-form** to locate alternative suppliers.

JASON INGRAM

Eurybia x herveyi.

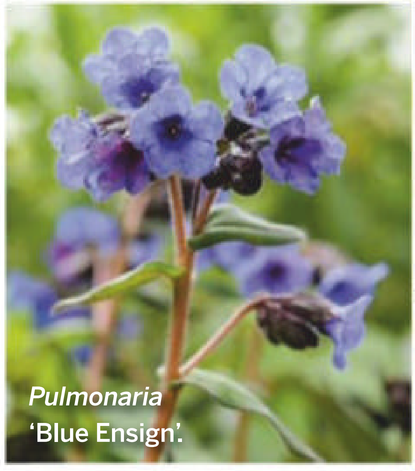
Hesperis matronalis var. albiflora.



Primula elatior.

Calamagrostis brachytricha.

Paeonia lactiflora 'Sarah Bernhardt'.

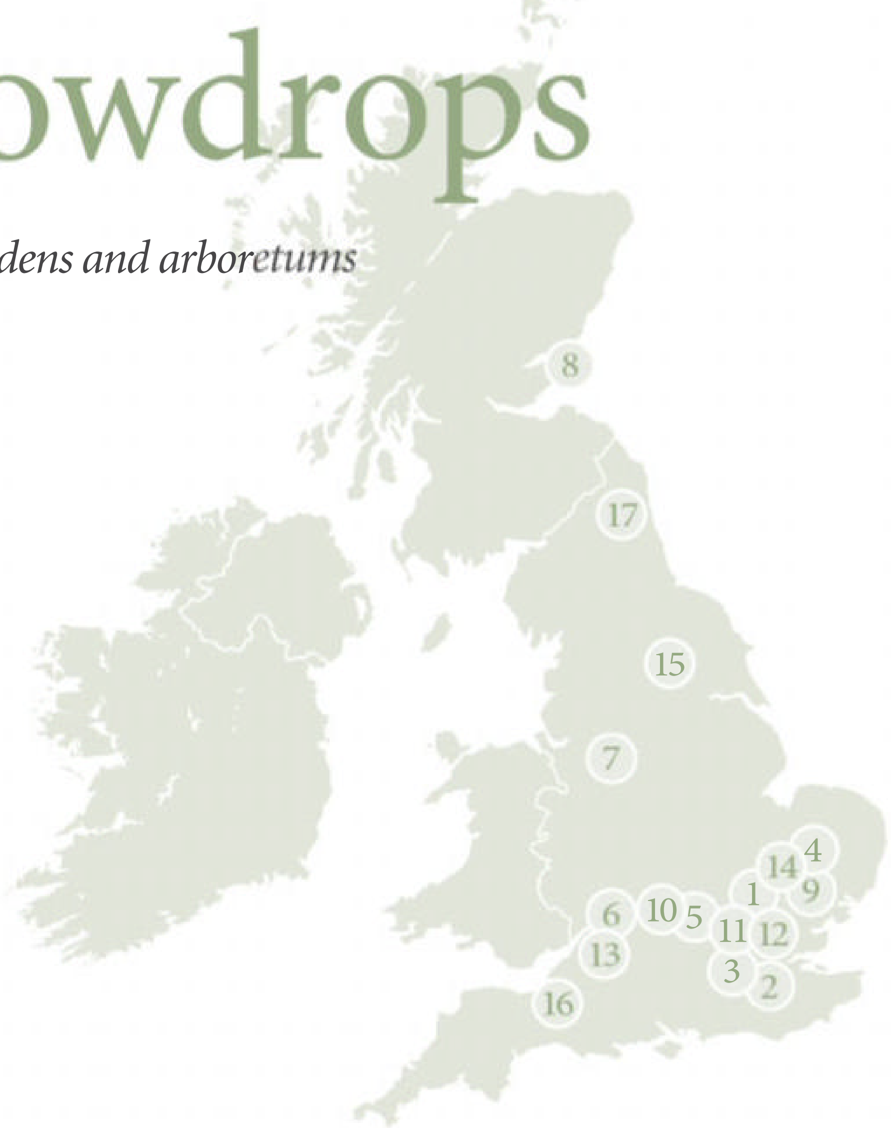


Pulmonaria 'Blue Ensign'.

Fritillaria meleagris var. *unicolor* subvar. *alba.*

Spectacular snowdrops

Make time in the new year to visit this collection of stunning gardens and arboretums



1 BENINGTON LORDSHIP GARDENS

Historic ruins serve as a spectacular backdrop to the stunning display of naturalised snowdrops. The walled garden will showcase the impressive collection of two hundred snowdrop varieties. Beautiful views over surrounding parkland and a lakeside stroll complete a visit. Daily 6 Feb–3 March, 12–4pm.

Stevenage, Herts SG2 7BS | 01438 869668 | beningtonlordship.co.uk

2 HEVER CASTLE & GARDENS

Follow a snowdrop trail through the grounds of Hever Castle, the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, and enjoy the early blossoms of camellia and quince in the award-winning gardens. Meander along the paths to enjoy blankets of these delicate flowers alongside the double moat that surrounds castle.

Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7NG | 01732 865224 | hevercastle.co.uk

3 WAKEHURST

Kew's wild botanic garden in Sussex has more than 500 acres of ornamental gardens, woodlands and a nature reserve. Throughout winter enjoy swathes of snowdrops leading you into the gardens from the visitor centre, around the picturesque Mansion pond and in the newly redesigned Winter Garden.

Ardingly, Haywards Heath RH17 6TN| 01444 894066 | kew.org/wakehurst

4 CHIPPENHAM PARK

With a breathtaking display of snowdrops and aconites in February followed by a succession of hellebores, scillas, cyclamen, deliciously scented daphnes and viburnums, and a crescendo of daffodils and other narcissi, the gardens are at their very best in early spring. Feb 9–March 31 and April 15–19.

Ely, Cambs, CB7 5PT | 01638 721416 | chippenhamparkgardens.co.uk

5 WATERPERRY GARDENS

Celebrate the first signs of spring with Snowdrop Weekends on 16/17 and 23/24 February. With more than 60 different varieties carpeting the ornamental gardens, enjoy these little heralds of spring in a magical setting. Free guided tours at 11am, 12.30pm and 2.30pm (Garden entrance fee applies).

Near Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1LA | 01844 339226 | waterperrygardens.co.uk

6 PAINSWICK ROCOCO GARDEN

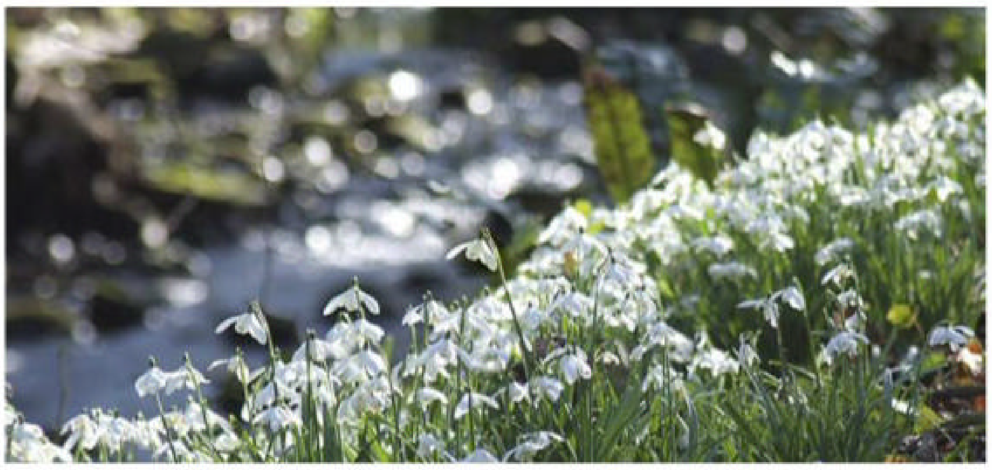
Nestled in a hidden valley and famed for having one of the largest collections of naturalised snowdrops in the country. Each year around five million snowdrops bloom and there are 15 known varieties in the Garden. Throughout February the expert horticultural team will be giving a daily talk.

Painswick, Stroud GL6 6TH | 01452 813204 | rococogarden.org.uk

7 RODE HALL AND GARDENS

Enjoy one of the UK's finest snowdrop walks through a wonderfully diverse landscape with over 70 varieties to mark the start of spring. Homemade lunches and cream teas served in the delightful courtyard kitchen. Group bookings welcome by appointment. 2 Feb–3 March, Tues–Sun 11am–4pm.

Church Lane, Scholar Green ST7 3QP | 01270 873237 | rodehall.co.uk



8 CAMBO GARDENS

Home to the National Collection of snowdrops with over 300 varieties in winter gardens, walled garden and woodlands. Enjoy woodland walks to the sea, family trails and lots of Snowdrop Festival events. Stables Visitor Courtyard plant shop bursting with hellebores, specialist snowdrops and aconites. Open daily.

01333 451040 | keri@cambogardens.org.uk

9 HEDINGHAM CASTLE

In late Winter and early Spring the ancient landscape around Hedingham Castle is blanketed with magnificent drifts of snowdrops, planted with at least thirteen different varieties in the nineteenth century, and making the Castle's winter gardens possibly the most romantic in the East of England.

01787 460 261 | Halstead, Essex CO9 3DJ | hedinghamcastle.co.uk

10 KINGSTON BAGPUIZE HOUSE SNOWDROP AND PLANT FAIR

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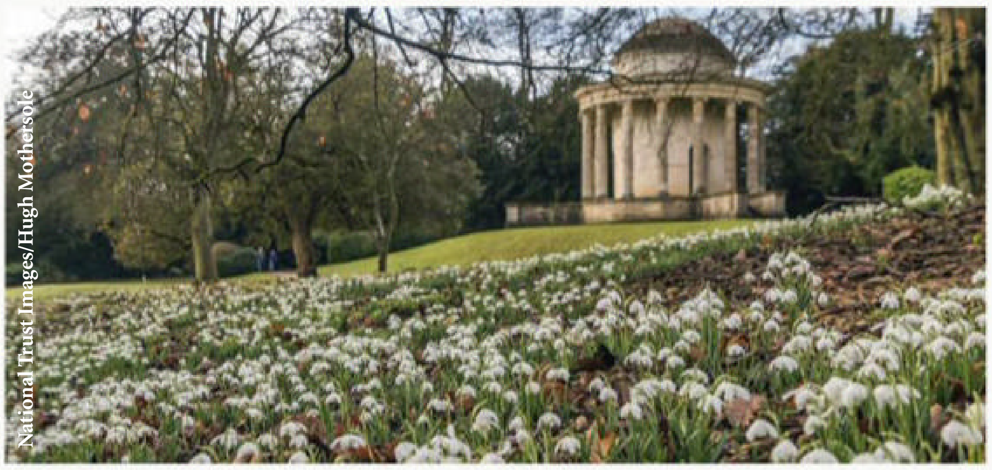
11 WELFORD PARK

This private home opens its gates for visitors to see the spectacular snowdrop display in the beech woods, many galanthus cultivars in the formal gardens and a good collection of hellebores, winter flowering shrubs and acconites. Open 30 January to 3 March 11am to 4pm, Wednesday to Sunday.

Newbury RG20 8HU | welfordpark.co.uk



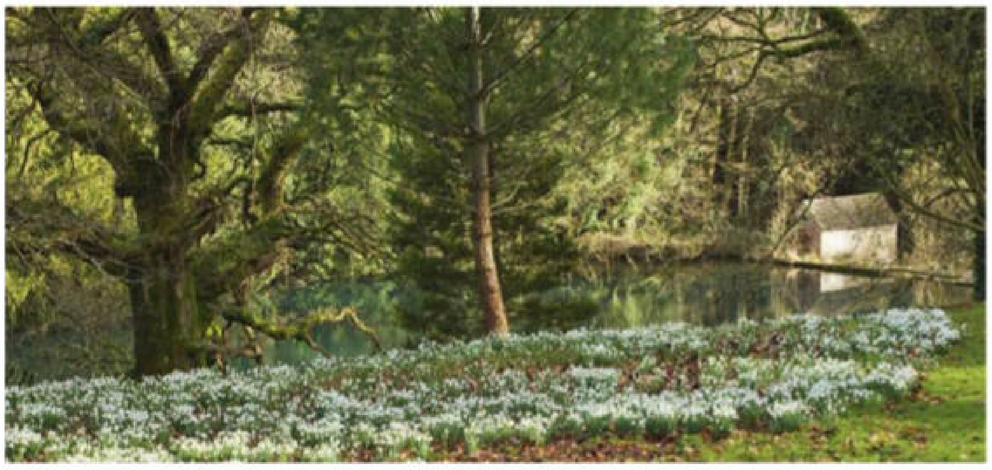
National Trust Images/Hugh Mothersole

12

NATIONAL TRUST STOWE GARDENS

February sees the gardens bursting with snowdrops, or as the team at Stowe fondly call them 'Stowedrops'. Since New Year they have started to develop in the masses throughout the Elysian Fields, Sleeping Wood and Lamport Garden. You'll be able to pick up a map to take you to all of the best spots.

New Inn, Buckingham MK18 5EQ | 01280 817156 | nationaltrust.org.uk/stowe



13

COLESBOURNE GARDENS

Historic home of snowdrops started in the 1880s by plant collector Henry John Elwes FRS with *G. elwesii* and greatly enhanced in recent years. Ten acres with lakeside and woodland paths, 350 varieties. Gates open 1pm. £8; children free, dogs welcome. Open Saturday and Sunday 2 February–3 March.

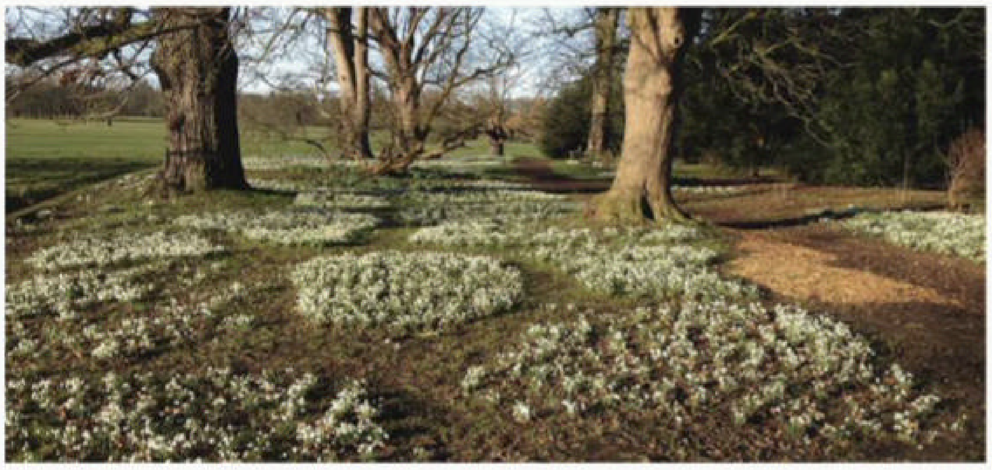
Cheltenham, Glos GL53 9NP | 01242 870264 | colesbournegardens.org.uk

14

NATIONAL TRUST ICKWORTH

The first hints of spring are starting to emerge at Ickworth. Join us on a guided walk exploring our beautiful displays of historic snowdrops as February reveals a carpet of white across our pleasure grounds.

Suffolk IP29 5QE | 01284 735270 | nationaltrust.org.uk/ickworth



15

BENINGBROUGH HALL, GALLERY & GARDENS

An impressive carpet of snowdrops lies along the ha-ha walk at Beningbrough's beautifully kept gardens. In 2016, 300,000 snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils were planted creating a spectaclular sight in spring. The walk itself has fantastic views and passes by several of the estate's oldest trees.

York YO30 1DD | 01904 472027 | nationaltrust.org.uk/beningbrough

16

FORDE ABBEY HOUSE AND GARDENS

Throughout February, the 30 acres of award-winning gardens are carpeted in a spectacular display of snowdrops, heralding the start of Spring. With guided tours (see website for more details), it's the perfect time of year to enjoy the garden starting to wake up from its Winter hibernation.

Chard, Somerset TA20 4LU | 01460 221290 | fordeabbey.co.uk

17

WALLINGTON – NATIONAL TRUST

For that early sign of spring, take a tranquil walk through the Wallington estate to enjoy a carpet of snowdrops as they cover the woodland floor; a much-needed wow moment after the long winter. To keep the carpet growing, join our gardeners as they plant another 100,000 snowdrops this February.

Cambo, Northumberland NE61 4AR | nationaltrust.org.uk/wallington

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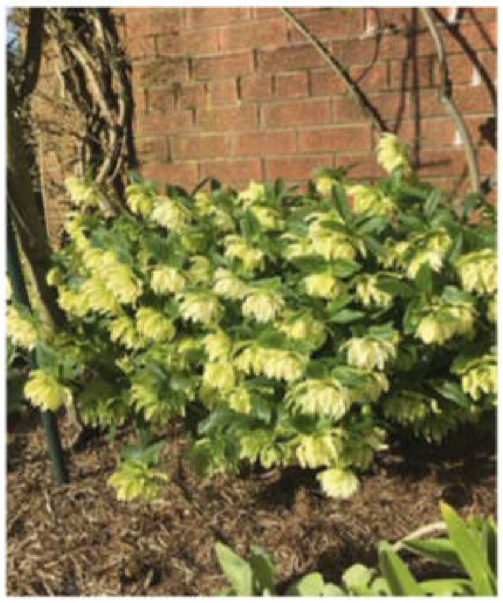

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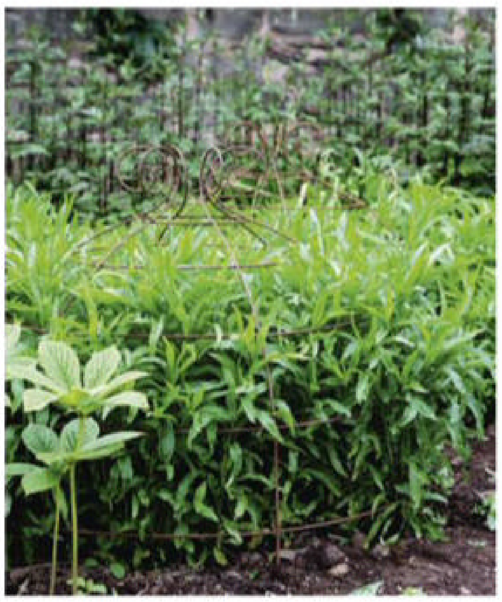

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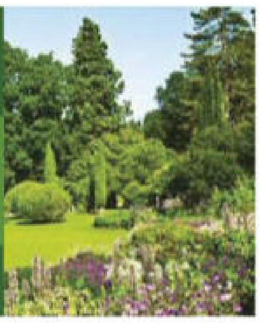

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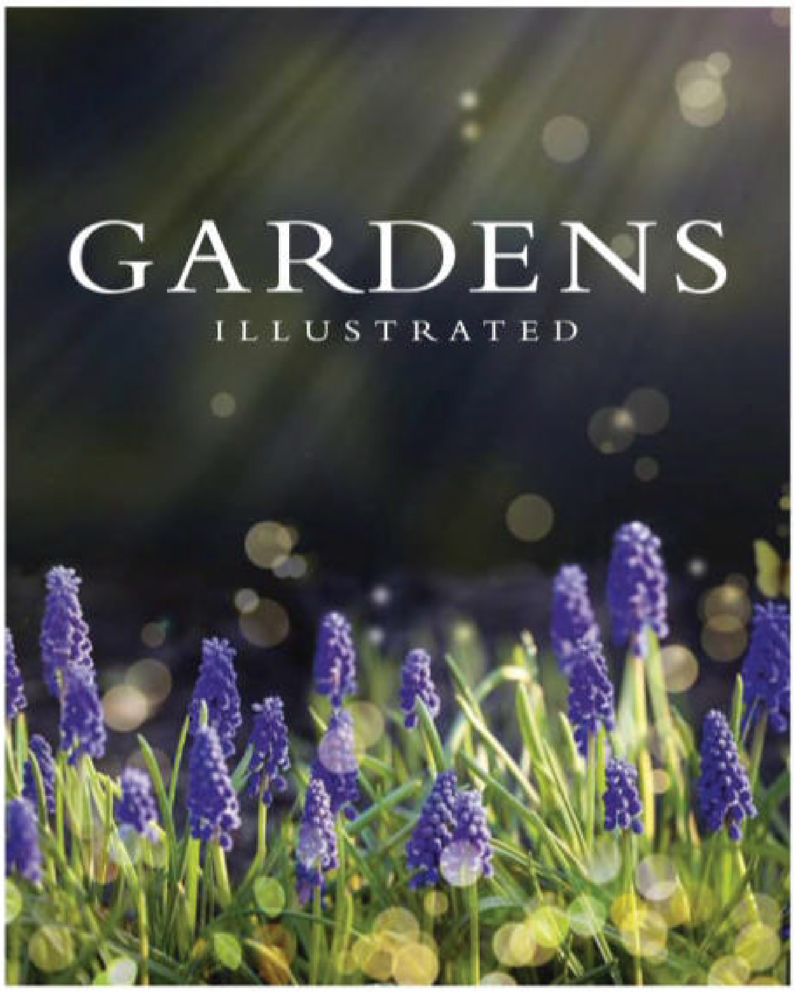

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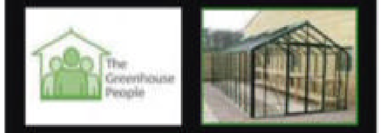

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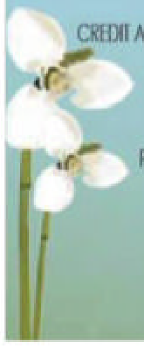

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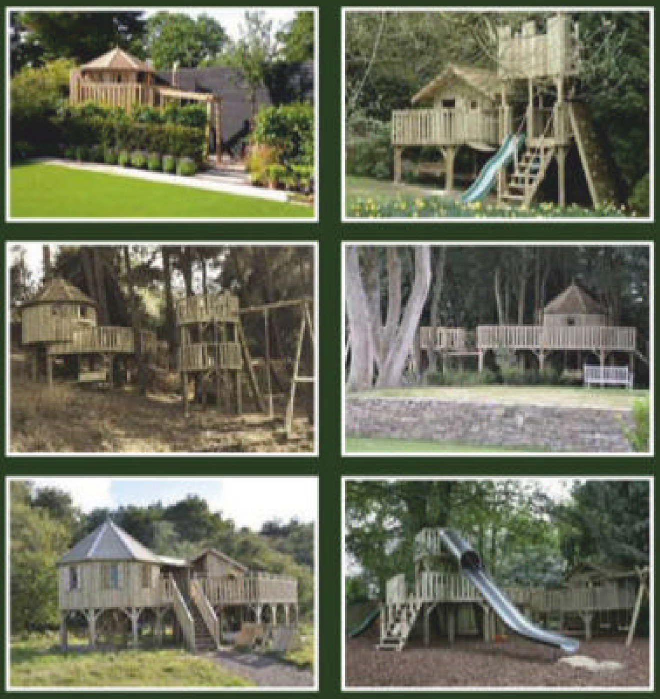

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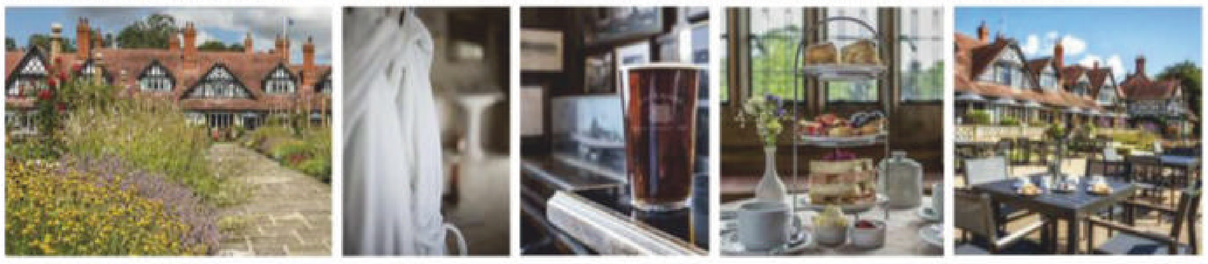

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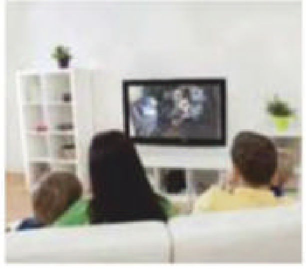

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MARCH ISSUE

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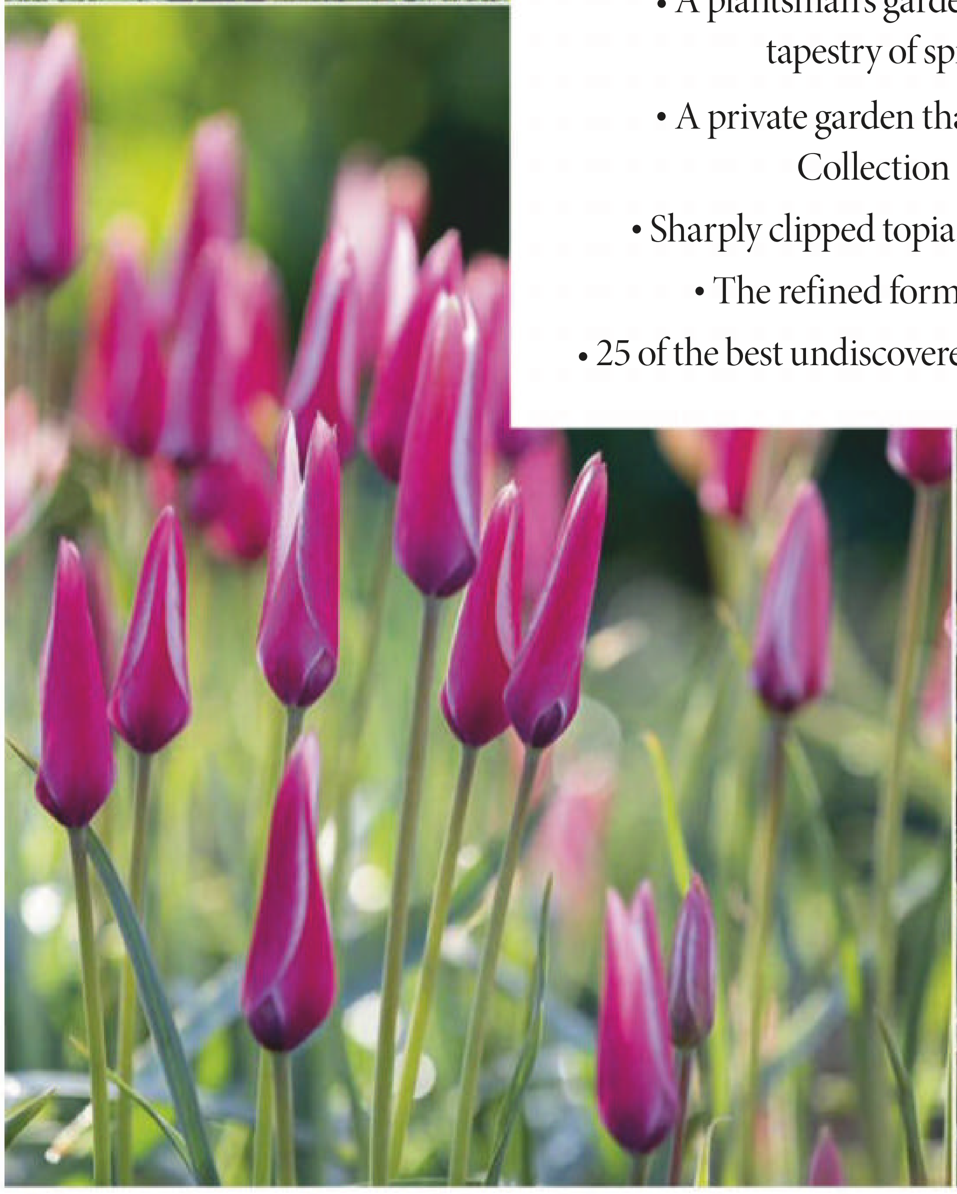
- A private garden that holds the National Collection of muscari
- Sharply clipped topiary in a London garden
- The refined forms of species tulips
- 25 of the best undiscovered gardens to visit this year



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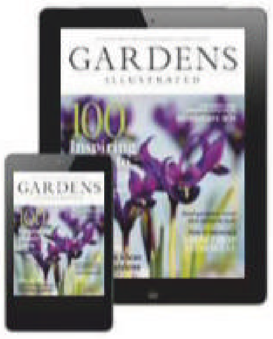

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The great indoors

With rounded, glossy green leaves on long, slender stalks, pileas or Chinese money plants, are easy to grow and propagate

WORDS JESS SNOWBALL
ILLUSTRATION AGATA WIERZBICKA

One houseplant that has well and truly gripped an entirely new generation of enthusiasts is *Pilea peperomioides*. Better known to many as the Chinese money plant or missionary plant, this striking houseplant has a skinny, woody stem and canopy of large, pancake-shaped leaves on rather long leaf stalks or petioles. *Pilea*, is the largest flowering genus in the nettle family, Urticaceae, and has between 600 and 700 species, of which perhaps the best known among houseplant lovers is *Pilea peperomioides*.

Although it was first collected in 1906 by the Scottish botanist George Forrest, the introduction of *Pilea peperomioides* to Europe as a houseplant came somewhat later and its popularity worldwide owes much to a Norwegian missionary called Agnar Espegren. In 1945 Espegren took a cutting of a *Pilea peperomioides* plant he found while travelling in Yunnan Province, China. Back in Scandinavia, Espegren began distributing the basal shoots of his unusual cutting to friends who passed it on to their friends, and slowly over time the plant spread across Europe and beyond, simply by numerous generous gardeners giving cuttings to family and friends. Even today you'll still find many people will give cuttings of their pileas as a present, keeping the tradition alive. Yet despite its popularity, *Pilea peperomioides* managed to remain largely unknown in horticulture for many years. Despite being described by Forrest in 1912, the first official illustration of the plant wasn't published until it appeared *The Kew Magazine* in 1984.

It is an easy and rewarding houseplant to grow, as long as it receives bright light but little direct sunlight. Its upright, but bendy form can vary depending on whereabouts in your house you place it but the real charm is the tiny basal shoots that appear, which are straightforward to propagate – meaning you will have a few fabulous presents to give out to family and friends. Cut the basal shoots away from the parent plant a few centimetres below the soil line and place them in a new pot or jar of water. During most repots of my *Pilea*, at least three shoots are ready to propagate.

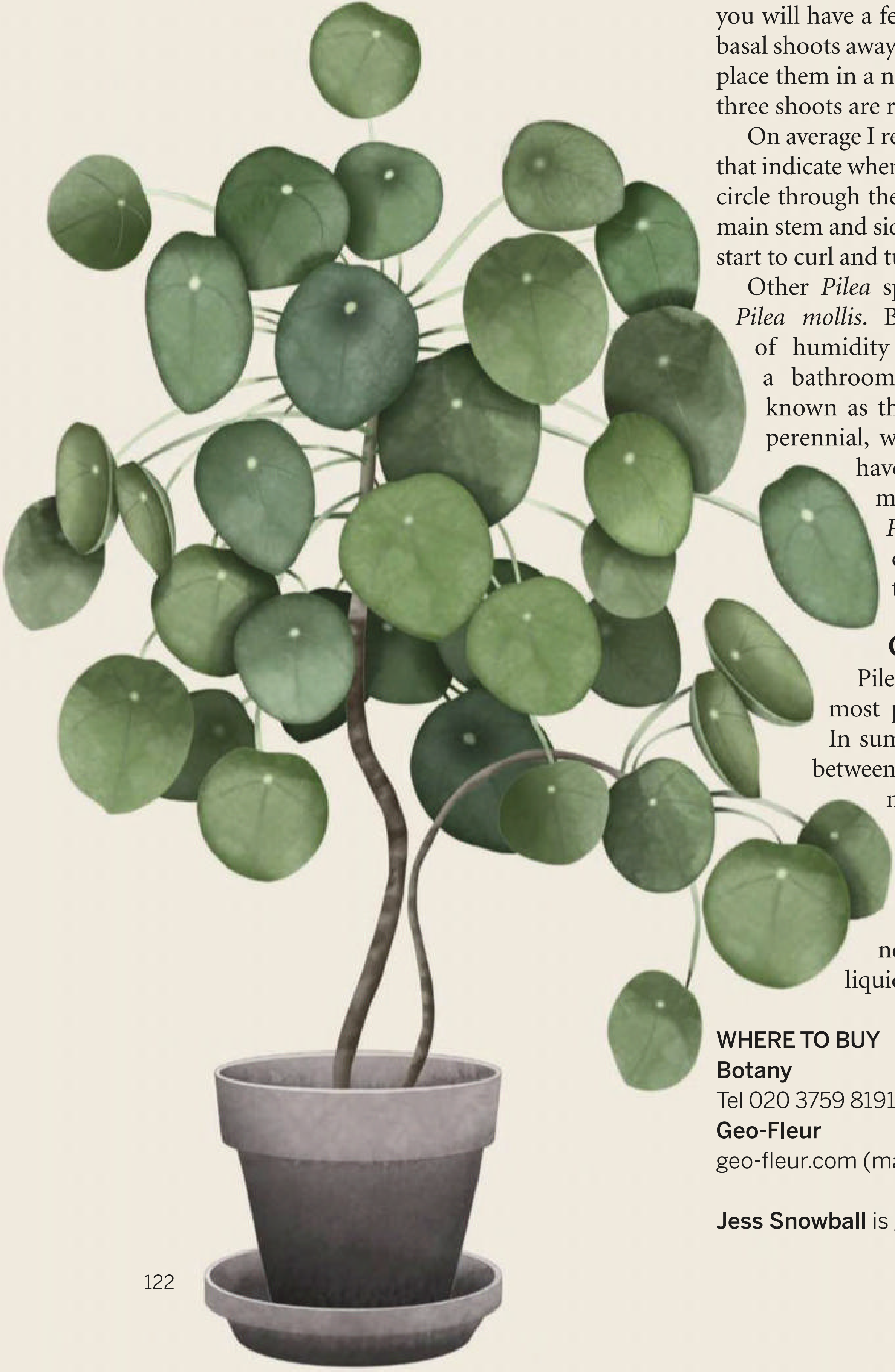
On average I repot my plant every six months, but there are a few tell-tale signs that indicate when repotting is necessary. Roots will start to emerge and eventually circle through the bottom of the pot, the baby offsets will crowd the base of the main stem and sides of the pot as they appear and grow larger, and leaves can also start to curl and turn slightly chlorotic or yellow as a result of water stress.

Other *Pilea* species that work well as houseplants are *Pilea cadierei* and *Pilea mollis*. Both these species prefer partial shade and higher levels of humidity than *Pilea peperomioides*, making them ideal plants for a bathroom or kitchen and especially for a terrarium. Commonly known as the aluminium plant, *Pilea cadierei* is an evergreen, spreading perennial, with ovate, dark-green leaves arranged in opposite pairs that have silvery metallic raised patches. *Pilea mollis* is similar but is more spreading in nature. Its leaves are similar in shape to *Pilea cadierei* but they have a rougher texture and a toothed edge. The leaves also bear short, stiff hairs with a dark bronzing tone in the centre of the leaf.

Cultivation

Pileas are straightforward to look after. They will grow well in most potting media, provided it is free-draining and well aerated. In summer, water moderately, allowing the soil to dry out a little in between waterings. In the winter months be careful not to overwater and make sure you allow any excess water to drain. They can tolerate a drier environment but not for too long as leaves will eventually start to wilt. I display mine in terracotta pots as the colour combination is very pleasing, but be aware that terracotta's porosity does mean it will dry out slightly more quickly. You'll need to feed your plant over the summer months with a balanced liquid fertiliser once every two weeks. □

PILEA PEPEROMIOIDES



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